













# INDIAN STRUGGLE 1942

Prof. Darbara Singh

M.Sc.

*The author's income from the  
present book will go to the  
Memorial Fund.*

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To  
The sweet and loving memory of  
The Great Indian Woman

## Kasturba Gandhi

The wife of Mahatma Gandhi, who died in His Majesty's Jail on Tuesday, the 22nd February, 1944, leading a life of service and sacrifice of the highest order.

## PREFACE

The struggle for freedom of the country has always been given the first attention by her people. To wrest that freedom from her foreign rulers or to defend it against her aggressors, they have made unique sacrifices. This has been exemplified by Russia, China, France, Belgium, Poland, Yugo Slavia, Greece and others in the present war. India, to wrest that freedom has earnestly made two big efforts, one in the year 1857, known commonly as "The Indian Mutiny", and the other the present one in the year 1942. About the first much literature is available and about the present this volume is the first of its kind.

The present struggle was not India's own choice ; it has been thrust upon her by the force of circumstances. It was intended to be non-violent, but the Congress that prepared the atmosphere, and sounded the call, was soon swept away, without initiating the struggle. The people, unguided have fought the struggle in their own way, excited by the arrest of their leaders. The Congress leaders, have not yet made up with the Government. In that sense the struggle is on.

The book is not intended as a Congress case, as for that purpose many secret documents that the Congress may be in possession of may have to be produced. The book is only a chronicle or a history,



giving the description of events as they occurred. Only those things have been given which have come out in papers and periodicals of repute or in Congress Publications. Louis Fisher's articles, and the Government resolutions on the molestation of Indian Women, and the evacuation of Rangoon have not been inserted, because of the ban put on by the Government.

In the book articles, statements, resolutions, and answers to questions by the persons, and the parties concerned have been given in full, as their full import has led to the shaping of events. Attempts to give extracts, divorced from their context, have been avoided, thinking them as useless, and faithless.

A brief chapter on Mahatma Gandhi has also been given as he is the principal figure in the struggle. What prominent men of the world have said about him is also given.

The author has to thank the editor of the Modern Review from which periodical he has drawn extensively.

Any suggestion towards the improvement of the book will be gratefully received.

**DARBARA SINGH.**

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## CHAPTER I

1942

This has been one of the most important and eventful years in the history of India. Early in the month of February the strong and costly Eastern Naval Fortress of India, Singapore, fell to the Japanese. A wave of consternation and helplessness began to spread all over India. Soon the battle of Burmah began in right earnest.

At that time Marshal Chiang Kai-Shek, the generalissimo of China, visited India. He was accompanied by his great wife, Madame Chiang Kai-Shek, on whom people all over the world agree in showering praise for her courage, ability, hard-work and extreme earnestness. The General and the Madame were warmly welcomed by the whole of India, official as well as non-official. The Congress leaders, like Jawahar Lal and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, were given an opportunity to meet them. Gandhiji was first of all denied an opportunity of meeting them as they were not allowed to go to Wardha. But later on, to satisfy the general feeling prevalent all over, Gandhiji came to Calcutta and the two met. It was a unique opportunity when the two great men of the two neighbouring, most thickly populated and afflicted countries, one in the process of being swallowed up and the other already swallowed up, humiliated and impoverished, but sizzling and struggling, met each

other. The General stayed in India only for a short while. While parting, he gave the following message to the people of India. It was released from the Government House, Calcutta. His Excellency Generalissimo Chiang Kai-Shek said :—

“Since my arrival in this country, I have found to my great satisfaction that there exists among the people of India unanimous determination to oppose aggression .....China and India comprise one half of world's population.....Our two peoples are peace-loving by nature. To-day they have not only identical interests but also the same destiny. For this reason they are in duty bound to side with the anti-aggression countries and fight shoulder to shoulder in order to secure real peace for the whole world.....The present struggle is one between Freedom and Slavery, between Light and Darkness, between Good and Evil, between Resistance and Aggression.....Lastly, I sincerely hope and I confidently believe that our ally, Great Britain, without waiting for any demands on the part of the people of India, will, as speedily as possible, give them real political power.....I am of opinion that this would be the wisest policy.....”

The Madame also gave her impressions in memorable words.

To the women of India she said, “I have been so short a time here and India is such a huge country that it is going to take me some time to really digest what I have seen. But one thing which has impressed me,

one of the many things, is the fact that *the women of India, like the women of China, will have to take a tremendous part in the reconstruction of the country.* I have met quite a number of leaders among Indian women and I am full of hope that the women of India will be able to fulfil that destiny and I am greatly impressed by the selfless quality of the women whom I have met. And if they are representatives of Indian women, I assure you, India has an even more glorious future than her past has been."

To the Indian press she said, "War has to be fought not only with bullets and with artillery and aeroplanes; it has to be fought by the press. You have a tremendous influence over the people. The press in China today reflects the will of the people, the heart of the people. Not only does it reflect but it is also the moulder of opinion. And you have, therefore, a tremendous responsibility. Voices die out, but the printed word seems to live on in the mind of the reader. I hope you will not take the easy way of writing the sensational but the more fundamental and honest way of writing what you think the people should know in order to educate mass opinion. That is my message to you

She also remarked about China, "We have no clear-cut religious sections as in India. Religion has more or less become part of our life. Politics is not coloured by religion. We are all Chinese. We are all one."

She also observed, "It has been possible to put up

this gigantic struggle, because we feel *it is better to die than to become slaves, and to have our children and children's children become slaves* because we are determined to see that China is once for all freed from Japanese aggression."

Soon after the General and his wife had left India, Sir Stafford Cripps came in with 'a just and final solution of the Indian constitutional problem.' He promised India that after the hostilities had ceased, steps would be taken by which the realisation of self-government in India be made possible at the earliest, with the rights for any province to join the Indian Union or secede from it at any time thereafter. Cripps consulted a large number of Indian leaders of different parties and communities but nothing came out. He went away and his proposals were withdrawn.

Then followed a period of recrimination of Indian leaders of the Congress by the British Government. In this period Burmah also fell to the Japanese. Gandhiji and the other leaders of the country became very apprehensive. The 'Quit India' movement was evolved. Of course the author was Gandhiji himself. The proposal for the movement was discussed by the Working Committee of the Congress in an informal meeting and again in a formal meeting and was then approved. The matter was then finally referred to the meeting of A. I. C. C. held in Bombay on August 7. The A. I. C. C. admitted the Quit India movement and sanctioned Civil Disobedience on a mass scale in the entire country under the leadership of Gandhiji. The matter was deci-

ded on August 8 at 10 p. m. when lo ! the whole night even was not allowed to pass over. By 5 a.m. on August 9, all the Congress leaders, members of the Working Committee and many members of A.I.C.C. were clapped in and despatched away. Mahatma Gandhi's plan, of course, was to write to the Viceroy whom he always regarded as a sincere man and his friend, seek his interview with his hands strengthened by the formal acceptance of his leadership by the country and permission given to him by the country to start mass civil disobedience movement in a manner, he thought fit, and at a moment, he considered opportune, and explore with him all avenues of settlement of the Indian problem. At 8 a.m. on August 9 the people of India heard the news on the air with a heavy heart.

Then followed a period of lawlessness and unheard of repression in the whole country and the reactions of the public to that measure. Many unfortunate and undesirable things happened. This went on for about six months with great severity. These disturbances considerably hindered the war effort of the Government. Although the Government has succeeded in controlling the disturbances. Yet the resentment of the people against the British and the British Government is deepening every hour.

Then at the close of the year, Gandhiji, from the prison, wrote a letter to the Viceroy in which he deplored the disturbances in the country and the Viceroy wrote to him in return holding Gandhiji and his colleagues entirely



responsible. Then followed a long correspondence of recrimination and counter-recrimination.

Thus ended the year 1942. Mahatma Gandhi, Jawahar Lal, Maūlana Abul Kalam Azad, Sardar Patel, Rajendar Prasad, Pant and a host of other Congress leaders of great eminence had been by then still in the jails, in unknown places. Mahadev Desai had died inside the jail. Many more Congressmen and non-Congressmen were also in jails. A large number of people had laid down their lives. Many ladies had become widows and a large number of children orphans. This is the struggle for freedom and this is the price.

And yet the goal is far off. But the yearning is ever the keener. Gandhiji is living. With him India's phase of the struggle for freedom will be over. God has given him a sufficiently long life and will give him more. Gandhi and India are synonyms.

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## CHAPTER II

### Mahatma Gandhi

He is a lean, frail and somewhat small figure. He has got long arms, sharp nose, broad forehead and penetrating eyes. His age is 76. When he sits on the pulpit, among a vast humanity, most impatient, most restive and eager to listen to him, he hypnotises it to a pindrop silence, as if by a magic wand, and converts it entirely to his own way of thinking. He speaks clearly, distinctly, and without emotion or emphasis as though dropping jewels into a golden bowl, unmindful of aught else, counting once and making no mistake.

His dress is only a loin-cloth of Khaddar gracefully done around his hips. His diet consists of fruits and milk.

He is India's greatest political leader holding the ground since 1920. All other leaders, great and small, with widely different views, have only to nod their heads in his presence. The adversary hesitates to interview him for fear of conversion and loss of ground. He is a man of strong will and wonderful persuasive powers. He is not a magician but his achievement of results points that he acts magically. He is a man of unshakable will and indefatigable energy. At his will he sets up movements, stops them and revives them. He knows the proper moment

when it can be done and the others are helpless. Masses are attached to him and by waving a little finger he makes them play to his tune. They have an affection and reverence for him.

He is the greatest living man of to-day. They compare him to Christ and Krishna and so on and yet he stands by himself. Love and affection is his motto. He is on his bended knees to compel response in others by touching their finer chords. Hatred and dislike are not known to him. He may not like the action of others, but he would not cease liking them. To shun the evil and not the evil-doer has been his practice. The evil-doer has only to come near him to fall under his spell of conversion.

He is the richest man in the world and yet the poorest. Millions come into his hands and yet he has not claimed a pie as his own. Wherever he goes, people shower money on him and he gives it for the national use. He is the king of kings. The honour done to him is ever envied by kings and emperors. Give him the riches of the world, he will kick them; offer him the kingdom of the whole world, he will refuse it.

Many take him as a great and astute politician and many others call him a great saint. But his character and the way he has shaped events show that he is at once a great saint and a great politician. He has been the dictator, willingly accepted, of the Congress for the

**last 25 years. He is the Congress and the Congress is his. He has run a current of freedom into the masses and his name is on their lips next to God's.**

**He is one of India's greatest social reformers whose name is sure to pass down to posterity. It is due to him that untouchability, not only in India but all the world over, is fast vanishing. His historic fast unto death will ever remain fresh in the minds of people. The low-born have found space to move about and air to breathe. Hindu-Muslim unity has been the breath of his nostrils not for any political purposes but for amicable human living. But for political power and the presence of the third party this would have been an accomplished fact.**

**He is simplicity and sincerity personified. He has inculcated in the minds of people the habit of simple living and sincere thinking. He is an institution in himself.**

**He is the heart and soul of India. He is the pride and glory of India. His services and sacrifices for India will always remain unique. All the councillors, judges, ministers and other officers of the Government, in civil as well as military, and a host of minor beneficiaries in the government service, and industrialists and mill-owners owe their ranks and riches directly or indirectly to him. For their sake he has been beaten, harassed and imprisoned and he has fasted several times. The service to his motherland has always been his.**

motto and no amount of sacrifice has been too much for him in that direction.

Gandhiji has been to the jail first of all in 1921, soon after Chaura Chauri incident. He got abscess, was operated upon and then freed after two years. He was put inside the jail in 1930 for starting mass civil disobedience and was set free after six months. He was again jailed in 1932, after his return from England where he had gone to represent the case of India in the second Round Table Conference. He was released after the famous Poona Pact. In the year 1933 he was again jailed for starting individual civil disobedience but was enlarged on the conclusion of the Gandhi-Irwin pact. Recently he was jailed on August 9, 1942, and released in 1944 on medical grounds.

Gandhiji has fasted several times to produce a moral pressure either on men around him or the Government. First of all he undertook a fast of seven days in 1913 while in South Africa to cure the moral lapse of the men of his *ashram*. The effect was wonderful. He then fasted for three days in India in 1915 to consolidate the labour strike. The strike was a success. He then fasted for 21 days on account of Hindu-Muslim dissension in 1924. He again undertook a fast unto death as a protest against the introduction of communal electorates for the depressed classes under the Communal Award in September 1932. He took another fast in the same year for one week as a penance against the Hindus being lethargic in the matter of carrying out Harijan uplift

programme. Another fast unto death he ventured in Rajkot in 1939 to induce Thakar Sahib to implement his promise of reforms but broke it on Viceroy's intervention, agreeing to adjudication by the Chief Justice of the Federal Court, Sir Maurice Gwyer, whose judgment went in his favour. Another fast he undertook on February 10, 1943, while in jail, insisting on being put among the members of the Working Committee to consider the whole situation, or on being convinced that he was in the wrong as he could not be merely a helpless witness to what was happening in his country. Nothing came out. But it was nothing short of a miracle that he was safe through the ordeal.

Gandhiji is a great English and Gujarati writer. He has written much. He has been the Editor of "Nawa-jivan," "Young India" and "Harijan" for several years. There have also been Gujarati edition of the same. He is always sparing in words and phrases. His sentences are short and pithy. They have clearness and perspicuity of their own. His writings reveal simplicity of thought, sincerity of purpose, profound wisdom, iron will and mastery of language. He has written not only on politics, but religious, social, educational, moral, sexual and economical subjects also with the same force and convincingness. His writings will always have freshness and vigour. His gramophone record on his 'belief on unscen power' will ever be read and listened, with immense pleasure and admiration.

Gandhiji has all along been an experimenter on

dietetics, dress, and truth.

For more about Mahatma Gandhi resort should be had to his autobiography, 'The Story of My Experiments with Truth.' It is an epic volume of great interest. A survey of his autobiography and his activities reveal Gandhiji as representing all that is best in India and is to be hereafter for a long time.

In making Gandhiji so great his wife Kasturaba played no mean part. She had all along co-operated with him and assisted him and suffered with him and sacrificed with him.

Below is a brief survey of what others have said about Mahatma Gandhi :—

"Mahatma Gandhi is the greatest man of India, since Buddha and is one of the creative forces of mankind. He has raised the Indian issue to the international status. Mr. Gandhi embodies in himself the highest aspirations of Hindu race."—*Mr. P. N. Saprú.*

"One day the world would look back on him and salute him as one born out of his time, as one who had seen the light in a dark and savage world."

"Gandhi embodies the wounded pride of India and in his satyagraha is reflected the eternal patience of her wisdom. Gandhiji admits that submission to injustice is worse than suffering it. He tells us that we can resist even through an act of non-violence which is an active force. If blood is to be shed let it be our blood..... Gandhiji to-day is not a free man. You may crucify the

body of such a man but the light in him, which is from the divine flame of truth and love, cannot be put out.”—

*Sir S. Radhakrishnan.*

“Gandhiji would go down in history probably as India’s greatest hero of modern times. Britain would remember him as one warrior who fought best on empty stomach.”—*The Houston Post in Texas.*

“Mr. Gandhi is one of the greatest thinkers and leaders of our time. I believe he is quite sincere. He is the greatest single influence in India, or at best in All-India Congress.”—*Sir Stafford Cripps.*

“Believe me or not, Mahatma Gandhi, who is the prophet and inspirer of millions of under-fed and semi-literate Indians, is one of the five most influential men in the world. He is the most impressive personality I have ever met.”—*Mr. Richard Busvine, the noted U. S. A. war correspondent.*

“Mr. Gandhi, by sheer dint of sufferings and sacrifices in the cause of the country, to-day is enshrined in the hearts of many Indians and occupies a position of influence among the masses of India which no other could claim.”—*Sir S. H. Ghaznavi.*

“Mahatma Gandhi is the St. Paul of our own days.”  
*Romain Rolland.*

“What I value most in any one is his sincerity, his devotion, his courage, his selflessness, his indifference to praise or blame or to public opinion, his harmlessness, his brotherliness. He who gives these to the world gives



to it infinitely more than those who give laws and schemes, doctrines and dogmas. Such a man is Gandhi.”—*George S. Arundale*.

“There are certain cardinal religious virtues whereon Mahatma Gandhi lays most stress. The first is called Truth, the second is Ahinsa and the third is Brahmacharya (chastity). He holds that through them an abiding work may be done in this world by mortal man in the fear of God.

“The two things whereby Mahatma Gandhi’s name will live hundreds of years hence, are (1) his Khaddar programme, and (2) his practice of Satyagraha.”—*C. F. Andrews*.

“We are fortunate and should be grateful that fate has bestowed upon us so luminous a contemporary—beacon to the generations to come.”—*Albert Einstein*.

“The Mahatma is a force for moderation, for reason, for practicability in politics. And India can ill-afford to do without him either now or for as long a time as one can foresee.

“If Mahatma Gandhi is so full of meaning and value to us in India, it is no less true that his life and work possess a meaning to the world outside, which at the present time is so much distracted by wars and threats of war.”—*Sir Mirza Mohammad Ismail*.

“India has the glory of being led by one who is a man among men and yet, what is a puzzle to the contemporary world, has developed into a miracle, a frail being

who is, a real phenomenon, a *Sithihaparajna*, an *Avatar*, one who has elevated politics to the sublimity of a religion, charged the conflicts of society with a high ethical and humanitarian touch, and strives to hasten the advent of that far off divine event, the parliament of the man and the federation of the world."—*Pattabhi Sitaramaya*.

"Though his value of activity lies in practical politics, people's minds have been struck by the analogy of his character with that of the great masters, whose spiritual inspiration comprehends and yet transcends all varied manifestations of humanity, and makes the face of worldliness turn to the light that comes from eternal source of wisdom."—*Rabindranath Tagore*.

"He is a great man. He is one of the greatest men of the world. He is dominated by high spiritual ideals. Whether these ideals are always practicable in our difficult world is another question."—*General Smuts*.

"Mr. Gandhi ranks with Sun-Yatsen as the maker of New Asia. Mr. Gandhi is not just George Fox, George Washington, or Lt Frances of Assisi but I suggest that he has the main ingredients of each in mixture with personal goodness, keen nationalism, deep Hindu understanding of man and the world, dialectic faddiness, a passion for social reform and an extremely astute political sense. Mr. Gandhi is the greatest Indian of his time and one of the greatest of all sons of Asia."—*Doctor William Patton, former Secretary of the National Christian Council of India*.

"He is a man who owns nothing and wants nothing. Who loves all mankind as his own family, who sees truth clearly and pursues it unflinchingly, who fears his God only and whom no earthly potentate can buy or cajole. Attainment of universal peace, universal brotherhood and universal love is peculiarly his work and mission of his life. Good men will seek him and listen to him. Difficulties will be brought to him and his wisdom and influence will be sought. He is on such a pinnacle that he need not mind confession of failure which to others will be humiliation and loss of prestige. When the supreme moment has come and the world in distress calls, what shall keep him back."—

*Sir Sirinivas Shastri.*

## **CHAPTER III**

### **Cripps Proposals**

In the early March of 1942 rumours were set afloat that the British Government had unanimously made up their mind to give India some real power towards self-determination and in a way which would be acceptable to all parties and interests living there.

Then the following official statement was made in the House of Commons on 11th March :—

“The crisis in the affairs of India arising out of the Japanese advance has made Britain wish to rally all the forces of Indian life to guard their land from the menace of the invader. In August 1940, a statement was made about the aims and policy which we are pressing in India. This amounted in short to a promise that as soon as possible after the war India should attain Dominion Status in full freedom and equality with this country and other Dominions under a constitution to be framed by Indians by agreement amongst themselves acceptable to the main elements in the Indian national life.

#### **Britain's Obligations.**

“This was, of course, subject to the fulfilment of our obligations for the protection of minorities, including the depressed classes and our treaty obligation to the Indian States and to a settlement of certain lesser

matters arising out of our long association with the fortunes of Indian Sub-continent.

“However, in order to clothe these general declarations with precision and to convince all classes, races and creeds in India of our sincere resolve the war cabinet have agreed unitedly upon conclusions for present and future action which, if accepted by India as a whole, would avoid alternative dangers of either that the resistance of a powerful minority might impose an indefinite veto upon the wishes of the majority or that a majority decision might be taken which would be resisted to a point destructive of internal harmony and fatal to the setting up of a new constitution.

### **Defence of India**

“We had thought of setting forth immediately the terms of this attempt by a constructive contribution to aid India in the realisation of full self-government. We are, however, apprehensive that to make a public announcement at such a moment as this might do more harm than good. We must first assure ourselves that our scheme would thus promote a reasonable and practical measure of acceptance and thus promote concentration of all thoughts and energies upon the defence of the native soil.

“We should ill-serve the common cause if we made a declaration which would be rejected by the essential elements in the Indian political world and which would provoke firm constitutional and communal disputes at a

moment when the enemy is at the gates of India.

“Accordingly, we propose to send a member of the war cabinet to India to satisfy himself on the spot by personal consultations that the conclusions upon which we are agreed and which we believe represent a just and final solution will achieve their purpose. The Lord Privy Seal and the Leader of the House, Sir Stafford Cripps, has volunteered to undertake this task. He carries with him the full confidence of His Majesty’s Government and he will strive in their name to procure the necessary measure of assent not only from the Hindu majority but also from those great minorities among which the Muslims are most numerous and on many grounds prominent.

### **Military Situation**

“The Lord Privy Seal will at the same time consult with the Viceroy and the Commander-in-Chief on the military situation, bearing always in mind the paramount responsibility of His Majesty’s Government by every means in their power to shield the people of India from the perils which now beset them. We must remember that India has a great part to play in the world struggle for freedom and that her helping hand must be extended in loyal comradeship to the valiant Chinese people who have fought alone so long.

“We must remember also that India is one of the bases from which the strongest counter-blows must be struck at the advance of tyranny and aggression.

“Sir Stafford Cripps will set out as soon as convenient

and suitable arrangements can be made. He will command in his task heart-felt good wishes of all parts of the House and meanwhile no words will be spoken or debates held here or in India which would add to the burden he has assumed in his mission or lessen the prospects of good result. During Sir Stafford Cripps' absence from Parliament his duties as Leader will be discharged by the Foreign Secretary, Mr. Eden."

It was a happy sign that the British Government had moved a step forward. But formulating their own scheme instead of asking India to submit her own was an ill-omen. Moreover, to promise something at an uncertain date instead of the present was ill-conceived. Besides, a reference to the offer of 1940 was an undesirable feature. Even then India anxiously awaited the proposals.

Towards the close of the month of March the Lord Privy Seal, Sir Stafford Cripps, who had just before acted as the British Ambassador at Moscow was sent to India by an aeroplane. Soon after his arrival Sir Stafford had interviews with the Congress leaders and leaders of Hindu Mahasabha, Muslim League and Sikhs, the members of Princes Chamber and a few other important people. Then on March 24 the following draft declaration relating to the British war cabinet's new constitution for India was issued :—

"The conclusions of the British war cabinet set out below are those which Sir Stafford Cripps has brought with him for discussion with Indian leaders, and the

question as to whether they will be implemented will depend upon the outcome of those discussions which are now taking place.

### **New Indian Union**

“His Majesty’s Government, having considered the anxieties expressed in this country and in India as to the fulfilment of promises made in regard to the future of India, have decided to lay down in precise and clear terms the steps which they propose shall be taken for the earliest possible realisation of Self-Government in India. The object is the creation of a new Indian Union which shall constitute a Dominion, associated with the United Kingdom and other Dominions by a common allegiance to the Crown, but equal to them in every respect and in no way subordinate in any aspect of its domestic and external affairs.

### **The Declaration.**

“His Majesty’s Government, therefore, make the following declaration :—

(a) Immediately upon cessation of hostilities, steps shall be taken to set up, in India, in a manner described hereafter, an elected body charged with the task of framing a new constitution for India.

(b) Provisions shall be made, as set out below, for the participation of Indian States in the constitution-making body.

(c) His Majesty’s Government undertake to accept and implement forthwith the constitution so framed subject only to :—



(i) The right of any Province of British India that is not prepared to accept the new constitution to retain its present constitutional position, provision being made for its subsequent accession, if it so decides.

“With such non-acceding Provinces, should they so desire, His Majesty’s Government will be prepared to agree upon a new constitution giving them the same full status as the Indian Union as arrived at by a procedure analogous to that here laid down.

### **Transfer of Responsibility.**

“(ii) The signing of a treaty, which shall be negotiated between His Majesty’s Government and the constitution-making body. This treaty will cover all necessary matters arising out of the complete transfer of responsibility from British to Indian hands. It will make provision in accordance with undertakings given by His Majesty’s Government, for the protection of racial and religious minorities, but will not impose any restriction on the power of the Indian Union to decide in future its relationship to other member-States of the British Commonwealth.”

“Whether or not an Indian State elects to adhere to the constitution it will be necessary to negotiate a revision of its Treaty arrangements so far as this may be required in the new situation.

(d) The constitution-making body shall be composed as follows unless the leaders of Indian opinion in the principal communities agree upon some other form before the end of hostilities :

### **Constitution-Making Body**

“Immediately upon the result being known of Provincial election, which will be necessary at the end of hostilities, the entire membership of the Lower Houses of Provincial Legislatures shall, as a single electoral college proceed to the election of the constitution-making body by the system of proportional representation. This new body shall be in number about 1/10th of the number of the electoral college.

### **State Representatives**

“Indian States shall be invited to appoint representatives in the same proportion to their total population as in the case of representatives of British India as a whole and with the same powers as British Indian members.

(e) During the critical period which now faces India and until the new constitution can be framed. His Majesty's Government must inevitably bear the responsibility for and retain the control and direction of the defence of India as part of their world war effort, but the task of organising to the full the military, moral and material resources of India must be the responsibility of the Government of India with the co-operation of the peoples of India. His Majesty's Government desire and invite the immediate and effective participation of the leaders of the principal sections of the Indian people in the counsels of their country, of the Commonwealth and of the United Nations. Thus they will be enabled to give their active and constructive help in the discharge

of a task which is vital and essential for the future freedom of India."

In a statement to the press accompanying the document, Sir Stafford said : "In handing you a copy of the conclusions arrived at by the war cabinet I want to explain and make clear to you the form in which the document is drafted.

"It is in the form of a declaration by His Majesty's Government as to the future of India and as to the immediate problem of the Indian Government and defence.

"I am giving it to you for publication to-day as a proposal which has been submitted to the leaders of Indian opinion by the war cabinet and its publication is not the publication of a declaration by His Majesty's Government but only of a declaration they would be prepared to make if it met with a sufficiently, general and favourable acceptance from the various sections of Indian opinion.

"I rely upon you all to make that position clear.

"Secondly, I am sure I can rely upon every paper in India and throughout the world, to deal with this document with the deep seriousness and responsibility which it deserves. You have a very great opportunity and a great responsibility in the way in which you deal with the matter.

### **A Weighty Issue**

"It is difficult to imagine a more weighty issue than this one, upon which the future, the happiness and the

freedom of 350 million people may well depend.

“Whatever you say to it I know I can trust you to say it with a full sense of its importance and with a full realisation that you too may play a part in the solution of this difficult problem, by the way you treat the document and by the manner of your publicity.

“I have waited to make the document public until I had the opportunity of submitting it personally to the leaders of the main interests in India and until they had been able to submit it to their colleagues.

“Now it is to be given a wider publicity and I commit to your hands in the confidence that whatever your views may be you will seek to help to bring all Indian opinion together and not to divide or exacerbate differences.

“I shall myself be broadcasting an explanation to-morrow night to the Indian peoples and in view of that fact I do not now propose to answer any questions except upon the meaning of the document itself, in case there are any passages which are not wholly clear to any of you.

“I will read the document to you slowly and thereafter I will answer your question.”

In the course of a two-hour press conference Sir Cripps answered and elucidated, and sometimes parried, with exemplary patience and easy mastery some 500 questions on the draft declaration.

He made it clear that the status, envisaged for the new Indian Union, included the right of secession. This

was explicitly laid down in the words that the treaty "will not impose any restriction on the power of the Indian Union to decide in future its relationship to other member-States of the British Commonwealth."

"The Indian Union will also be absolutely free to decide its future relations with other member-States of the Commonwealth one of which is Great Britain. It will be completely free either to remain within or go without the Commonwealth," he declared.

Explaining the use of the expression "cessation of hostilities," he pointed out that there was a difference between this and the "termination of the war." There might be a difference of one or two years between the cessation of hostilities and the end of the war. The idea was that the constitution-making body should be set up as early as practicable after the cessation of hostilities. "We do not impose anything on India, not even a time-limit," he remarked.

He declined to say anything specific about the last paragraph of the document dealing with immediate arrangements envisaged in the Government of India Executive, but said : "The intention of this paragraph is to indicate to the Governor-General who is responsible for the formation of the Government of India the broad lines upon which in accordance with the scheme that Government may be formed. All the details of the formation of that Government are for the Governor-General to decide and we have not attempted and should

not attempt to take that responsibility out of his hands. Nothing was obligatory on the Governor-General but he could indianise the Executive Council. The general direction was laid down in the paragraph. The object was to give the fullest measure of Government to the Indian people at the present time consistent with the possibilities of the present constitution, which could not be changed till end of the war. But there might be made some small changes with regard to the composition of the Executive Council particularly the condition that there should be three service members of ten years' standing. "The intention of the document, as far as possible, subject to the reservation of defence, is to put power in the hands of Indian leaders."

Sir Stafford added : "So far as the Governor-General could, within the sections of the existing constitution, he would attempt to form his Executive Council with a body of Indian leaders, who could give leadership to the country and could help to direct the counsels of the country in the Executive Council of the Commonwealth, in the War Cabinet and of United Nations in the Pacific War Council."

Sir Stafford made it clear that "the scheme goes through as a whole or is rejected as a whole." It would not be possible to retain only the part pertaining to the immediate arrangements at the centre and discard the rest of the draft scheme.

"The Defence of India will not be in Indian hands,

even if all the parties want it,' he declared, in reply to a series of questions. "It would be the worst thing for the defence of India ; it would disorganise the whole defence arrangements, and such disorganisation would be fatal."

The substance of the proposals was :

After the war—

(1) India to have full Dominion Status, with the right to secede ;

(2) Every province in British India and every Indian State to have the right of self-determination ;

(3) Provisions for the formation of one or more Indian Unions ;

(4) Details of the constitution-making body for the proposed Union or Unions.

For the duration of the war—

(1) The Defence of India to remain as sole responsibility of His Majesty's Government even if all parties in India wanted it ;

(2) Complete Indianization of the Viceroy's Executive Council, excepting that the Defence portfolio will continue to be held by the Commander-in-Chief.

All those leaders and personalities consulted by Sir Stafford Cripps, examining the scheme in their own way condemned it outright. The fundamental defects of the scheme were :—

(1) The unity and integrity of the country was destroyed. The scheme allowed freedom to Indians

to form two or more unions independently of one another. This division of the country into several principalities would considerably weaken the struggle of the country against any foreign aggressor and would also enable the different principalities to be continuously at war against one another. To preserve the sovereignty, the United States of America had to fight a long and bloody civil war. If the Southern States had been allowed to secede, the U. S. A. could never have been what it is to-day. The same is the case with Canada. Before Canada obtained self-government, there were constant quarrels between the English-speaking and the French-speaking Canadians. They professed different religions, the former being Protestants and the latter Roman Catholics. But they were not allowed to form separate political units. The strength of Canada lies in its unity. In South Africa even in the white population Union, the principal elements are sprung from the British and the Dutch (Boer) stock. But at the time of the formation of the Union neither the one nor the other were allowed the option of seceding from the Union. And this is to the strength of South Africa. In the case of Ireland so long as the Ulster stands aloof from the rest of Ireland, Ireland cannot be as prosperous and strong as it ought to be. And De Valera has been striving his best to bring about unity between Ulster and the rest of Ireland. It may also be remarked that whereas other countries are trying hard and are spilling their blood to extend their territories or at least not to



lose an inch of what they possess India by this scheme should divide herself and lose without having met any aggressor. Soviet Russia did not given any of its parts the right to stand aloof and form a separate Union. On the contrary it shed the blood of millions of its citizens to recover the lost territory. Similarly China tried at the cost of rivers of blood to recover Manchuria, etc. But the territorial and political integrity of a vast country like India was being light-heartedly sacrificed.

(2) The scheme encouraged communal Raj ; one part of India would be Hindu India and the other Muslim India. Without any natural dividing factor the division would accentuate communal feelings which again would mean the enslavement of the country.

(3) The scheme was an apple of discord. It pleased none but Jinnahites. Among the Muslims there have been various groups—Momins, Jamiyat-ul-Ulemas, Azad Conferences. Shias, Ahrars, etc.. whose numerical strength and political import even are greater than those of Jinnahites and they think that the salvation of India lies in its unity. The scheme unnecessarily meant favouring a small section of the Muslim community and encouraging dissensions among its members.

(4) The scheme granted the right of self-determination to provinces but nothing prevented the different parts of non-acceding provinces to press for the right of

self-determination being extended to them. This meant deterioration in an otherwise indivisible, self-sufficient sub-continent that has been known as a single geographical and political entity for centuries.

Not only this much, the scheme promised nothing to the people of India for the duration of the war. All these promises, contemplated in howsoever a good faith, although, in fact, resulting in its perpetual enslavement could in no way enthuse her masses to resist the aggression of any imminent foreign invader, which was the most imperative need of the hour and for the sake of which the scheme was drawn up and Sir Stafford Cripps was sent to India by aeroplane at the most critical time.

In this respect it will be useful to give rather in detail what happened in India between the leaders of the country and Sir Stafford Cripps, before proceeding onwards.

Mahatma Gandhi described the offer as a post-dated cheque ; the Hindu Mahasabha condemned it as contemplating the 'Balkanization of India' ; the liberal leaders protested against the proposed splitting up of the country as a travesty of self-determination.

As regards the Congress there were several meetings between Sir Stafford and Maūlana Abul Kalam Azad, between Sir Stafford and Maulana Sahib and Pandit Jawahar Lal, between the Commander-in-Chief, Sir Archibald Wavell, Maulana Sahib and Pandit Nehru, and also between American Government's representative Mr.

Louis Johnson and Pandit Jawahar Lal, lasting for several days, in which the Congress leaders were seeking clarification of the several issues that emerged out during their discussion and deliberations. At one time it was reported that agreement had been reached between Sir Stafford and the Congress leaders and an atmosphere of joy and relief prevailed in the whole of India. But soon came the news that it was not actually so. This bewildered the world.

The Congress leaders applied their mind to the problem and showed their keen desire to accept the proposals if some modification could be made therein, or assurances given, or even conventions agreed upon within the framework of the proposals. They did not mind the future even, although the proposals revealed terrible mess and confusion, or at least nothing bright. They concentrated only on the present and how best to enthuse the Indian nation for the defence of the country against the imminent Japanese invasion which had been the desire of the Working Committee of the Congress as admitted by Sir Stafford himself in his correspondence with the Congress President. The war cabinet would insist on the Defence in the hands of the Commander-in-Chief and the leaders agreed to that even but insisted on the establishment of a National Government that should work as a cabinet and the abolition of the India Office. They did not mind who formed the National Government, provided they were representative Indians, Muslim Leaguers or others. This was first of all agreed

to by Sir Stafford Cripps as revealed by a letter of the Congress President to him. But later on Sir Stafford seems to have shifted his position and showed his extreme inability to consent to that arrangement pointing out that the arrangement would involve constitutional changes of a most complicated character and would mean the rule of the immovable majority party and hence dictatorship of the majority, without minding that the majority would be the result of an election in which the success has got to be on the side of the party working whole-heartedly and selflessly for the sake of the country. But this was merely an excuse and no real difficulty and was hence pointed out at the eleventh hour, when it could not be discussed, and the negotiations broke. The British Government did not show any inclination to part with power. The powers of the proposed Defence Minister even show that he was to be no better than a mere clerk, especially at the time of war. To part with power was too much for the British Government to consent to. This proved to be the rock against which the Cripps proposals struck and foundered. The Congress leaders then advised the country not to accept Sir Stafford Cripps' proposals.

The following extracts from correspondence between Sir Stafford and the Congress President, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, throws light on the causes of the failure of the negotiations :—

Sir Stafford wrote,

“My dear Maulana Sahib,

I have as I promised when I last saw you consulted His Majesty's Government as to what further step could be taken in order to meet the criticism of your Working Committee that under clause (e) of the Draft Declaration, the Defence of India would not fall to be administered by a representative Indian. Although it is impossible to make any change in the existing constitution during the period of hostilities His Majesty's Government are anxious to give representative Indians the maximum possible participation in the Government during that period, in accordance with the principle laid down in clause (e) of the Draft Declaration.

“His Majesty's Government are anxious to do the utmost to meet the wishes of the Indian people, and to demonstrate their complete trust in the co-operative effort of the two peoples. British and Indian, which they hope may reinforce the defence of India. I am therefore authorised to propose to you as a way out of the present difficulties that :—

(a) The Commander-in-Chief should retain a seat in the Viceroy's Council as war member and should retain his full control over all the war activities of the armed forces in India, subject to the control of His Majesty's Government and the War Cabinet, upon which body a representative Indian should sit with equal powers in all matters relating to the Defence of India. Membership of the Pacific-Council would likewise be offered to a representative Indian.

(b) An Indian representative member would be

added to the Viceroy's Executive, who would take over those sections of the Department of Defence which can organisationally be separated immediately from the Commander-in-Chief's War Department. In addition, this member would take over the defence co-ordination department which is at present directly under the Viceroy, and certain other important functions of the Government of India which are directly related to Defence and which do not fall under any of the other existing departments.

"His Majesty's Government very much hope, as I personally hope, that this arrangement will enable the Congress to come into the scheme so that if other important bodies of Indian opinion are also willing, it will be possible for His Excellency the Viceroy to embark forthwith upon the task of forming the new National Government in consultation with the leaders of the Indian opinion."

To this the Congress President replied :

"Dear Sir Stafford,

In the Congress resolution we expressed our dissent from several important and far-reaching proposals for the future. Further consideration of these proposals has only strengthened us in our conviction in regard to them, and we should like to repeat that we cannot accept them as suggested. The over-riding problem before us all, and more especially before all Indians, is the defence of the country from aggression and foreign invasion, the future, important as it is, will depend on

what happens in the next few months and years. We were therefore prepared to do without any assurances, for this uncertain future, hoping that though one sacrifices in the defence of one's country, we would lay the solid and enduring foundations for a free and independent India. We concentrated, therefore, on the present.

"Your original proposals in regard to the present, as contained in clause (e) of the proposed Declaration, were vague and incomplete, except in so far as it was made clear that His Majesty's Government must inevitably bear the full responsibility for the Defence of India. These proposals, in effect, asked for participation in the tasks of to-day with a view to ensure the future freedom of India. Freedom was an uncertain future, not for the present ; and no indication was given in clause (e) of what arrangements or governmental and other changes would be made in the present. When the vagueness was pointed out, you said that this was deliberate, so as to give you freedom to determine these changes in consultation with others. In our talks you gave us to understand that you envisaged a National Government which would deal with all matters except Defence.

"Defence at any time, and more particularly in war-time, is of essential importance and without it a National Government functions in a very limited field. Apart from this consideration, it was obvious that the whole purpose of your proposals and our talks centred on the urgency of the problem created by the threat of the invasion of India. The chief functions of a

National Government must necessarily be to organise Defence both intensively and on the widest popular basis and to create a mass psychology of resistance to an invader. Only a National Government could do that, and only a Government on which this responsibility was laid. Popular resistance must have a National background, and both the soldier and the civilian must feel that they are fighting for their country's freedom under National leadership.

"We pointed this out to you. The question became one not of just satisfying our National aspirations but of effective prosecution of the war and fighting to the last any invader who set foot on the soil of India. On general principles, a National Government would control through a Defence Minister, and the Commander-in-Chief would control the armed forces, and would have full latitude in the carrying out of the operations connected with the war. An Indian National Government should have normally functioned in this way. We made it clear that the Commander-in-Chief in India would have control of the armed forces and the conduct of operations and other matters connected therewith.

"With a view to arriving at a settlement, we were prepared to accept certain limitations on the normal powers of the Defence Minister. We had no desire to upset in the middle of the war the present military organisation or arrangements. We accepted also that the higher strategy of the war should be controlled by the War Cabinet in London which would have an Indian



member. The immediate object before us was to make the Defence of India more effective, to strengthen it, to broadbase on the popular will, and to silence all redtape, delay and inefficiency from it. There was no question of our interfering with the technical and operational sides. One thing, of course, was of paramount importance to us ; India's safety and Defence. Subject to this primary consideration, there was no reason why there should be any difficulty in finding a way out of the present impasse, in accordance with the unanimous desire of the Indian people, for in this matter there are no differences among us.

“We do not think that there is any inherent difficulty in the way of constitutional changes during the war. Everything that helps in the war not only can be but must be done, and done with speed. This is the only way to carry on to win a war. No complicated enactments are necessary. A recognition of India's freedom and right to self-determination could easily be made, if it was so wished, together with certain other consequential but important changes. The rest can be left to future arrangements and adjustments. I might remind you that the British Prime Minister actually proposed a union of France and England on the eve of the fall of France. No greater or more fundamental change could be imagined, and this was suggested at a period of grave crisis and peril. War accelerates change. It does not fit in with static conceptions.

In the course of our talk many matters were cleared

up unfortunately to our disadvantage. You had referred both privately and in the course of public statements to a National Government and a cabinet consisting of 'Ministers.' These words have a certain significance and we had imagined that the new Government will function with full powers as a Cabinet, with the Viceroy acting as a constitutional head. But the new picture that you placed before us was really not very different from the old, the difference being one of degree and not of kind. The new Government could neither be called, except vaguely and inaccurately, nor could it function as a National Government. It would just be the Viceroy and his Executive Council, with the Viceroy having all his old powers.

We did not ask for any real changes, but we ask for definite assurances and conventions which would indicate that the new Government would function as a Free Government the members of which act as members of the Cabinet in a constitutional Government. In regard to the conduct of the war and connected activities the Commander-in-Chief would have freedom, and he would also act as a War Minister.

We were informed that nothing can be said at this stage, even vaguely and generally about the conventions that should govern the 'New Government and the Viceroy. This was a matter in the Viceroy's sole discretion, and at a later stage it could be discussed directly with the Viceroy. Ultimately there was always the possibility of the members of the Executive Council

resigning or threatening to resign, if they disagreed with the Viceroy. That sanction or remedy is always open, but it is curious that we should base our approach to a new Government on the probability of conflict and resignation at the very outset picture.

The picture, therefore, placed before us is not essentially different from the old one. The whole object that we, and I believe you, have in view—that is to create a new psychological approach to the people, to make them feel that their own National Government had come, that they were defending their newly won freedom—would be completely frustrated when they saw this old picture again, with even the old labels on.

The continuation of the India Office, what has been a symbol of evil to us, would confirm this picture. It has almost been taken for granted for some time past that the India Office would soon disappear as it was an anachronism. But now we are told that even this undesirable relic of a past age is going to continue.

The picture of the Government which was so like the old in all essential features, is such that we cannot fit into it. Normally, we would have little difficulty in disposing of this matter for it is so far removed from all that we have striven for, but in the circumstances of to-day we were prepared to give full consideration to every proposal, which might lead to an effective organisation of the Defence of India. The peril that faces India affects us more than it can possibly affect any foreigner, and we are 'anxious and eager to do our

utmost to face it and overcome it. But we cannot undertake responsibilities when we are not given the freedom and power to shoulder them effectively and when our old environment continues, which hampers the national effort.

Whilst we cannot accept the proposals you have made, we want to inform you that we are yet prepared to assume responsibility, provided a truly National Government is formed. We are prepared to put aside for the present all questions about the future, though as we have indicated, we hold definite views about it. But in the present, the National Government must be Cabinet Government with full power and must not merely be a continuation of the Viceroy's Executive Council. In regard to defence we have already stated what, in our opinion, the position should be at present. We feel that such an arrangement is the very minimum that is essential for the functioning of a National Government and for making the popular appeal which is urgently needed.

We would point out to you that the suggestions we have put forward are not our only but may be considered to be the unanimous demand of the Indian people. On these matters there is no difference of opinion among various groups and parties, and the difference is as between the Indian people as a whole and the British Government. Such differences as exist in India relate to constitutional changes in the future. We are agreeable to the postponement of this issue so

that the largest possible measure of unity might be achieved in the present crisis for the defence of India. It would be a tragedy that even where there is this unanimity of opinion in India, the British Government should present a free National Government for functioning, and from serving the cause of India as well as the larger causes for which millions are suffering and dying to-day."

Then Sir Stafford Cripps wrote to the Congress President :

"My dear Maulana Sahib,

"I was extremely sorry to receive from you letter expressing the rejection by Congress Working Committee of His Majesty's Government Draft declaration.

"I need not go into the question of the division of duties between the Defence Minister and the Commander-in-Chief as a war member with which you deal at length. This division allotted to the Defence Minister all functions outside those actually connected with the General Headquarters, Navy Headquarters and Air Headquarters which are under the Commander-in-Chief as head of the fighting forces in India. .

"Nothing further could have been done by way of giving responsibility for Defence Services to represent the Indian members without jeopardising the immediate defence of India under the Commander-in-Chief. This Defence is, as you know, a paramount duty and responsibility of His Majesty's Government, while unity of

command is essential in the interests of the allied help to India.

“The real substance of your refusal to take part in a National Government is not such as would enable you to rally the Indian people as you desire.

“You may take two suggestions : First that the constitution might now be changed. In this respect I would point out that you made this suggestion for the first time last night nearly three weeks after you had received the proposals and I would rather remark that every other representative with whom I have discussed this view has accepted the practical impossibility of any such legislative change in the middle of a war and at such a moment as the present.

“Second, you suggest a truly National Government be formed which must be a Cabinet Government with ‘full power’ without constitutional changes of a more complicated character and on a very large scale this would not be possible as you realise when such a system to be introduced by contravention under the existing circumstances, the nominated cabinet, (nominated presumably by the major political organisations) would be responsible to no one but itself, could not be removed and would in fact constitute an absolute dictatorship of the majority. This suggestion would be rejected by all minorities in India, since it would subject all of them to a permanent and autocratic majority in the cabinet. Nor would it be consistent with the pledges already given by His Majesty’s Government to protect the rights

of these minorities.

“In a country such as India where communal divisions are still so deep an impossible majority Government of this kind is not possible. Apart from this, however, until such time as the Indian people frame their new constitution. His Majesty's Government must continue to carry out its duties to those large sections of the Indian people to whom it has given pledges. The proposal of His Majesty's Government went as far as possible short of a complete change in the constitution which is generally acknowledged as impracticable in the circumstances of to-day.

*While therefore both I and His Majesty's Government recognise the keen desire of your working committee to carry on the war against the enemy by every means in their power, they regret that your working committee has not seen its way to join in the war effort upon the conditions sincerely offered, the only conditions which would have brought together all the different communities and sections of the Indian people.”*

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad replied in his rejoinder to Sir Stafford Cripps:

“My colleagues and I were considerably surprised to read it.

“Your statement that we have for the first time after three weeks suggested a change in the constitution is hardly correct. In the course of our talks reference was made to it, but it is true that we did not lay stress on

it as we did not want to introduce new issues. But when you stated explicitly in your letter that we had agreed that no constitutional changes could be made during the war we had to deny this and correct your impression.

“There has been a progressive deterioration in the British Government’s attitude as our negotiation proceeded. What we were told in our very first talk with you is now denied or explained away. You told me then that there would be a National Government which would function as a cabinet and that position of the Viceroy would be analogous to that of the King in England *vis-a-vis* his cabinet. In regard to the India Office, you told me, that you were surprised that no one had so far mentioned this important matter, and that the practical course was to have this attached or incorporated with the Dominions Office. The whole of this picture which you sketched before us has now been completely shelved by what you told us during our last interview.

“You have put forward an argument in your letter which at no time during our talks was mentioned by you. You refer to the ‘absolute dictatorship of the majority.’ It is astonishing that such a statement should be made in this connection and at this stage. This difficulty is inherent in any scheme of a mixed cabinet formed to meet any urgency, but there are many ways in which it can be provided for. Had you raised this question we would have discussed it and found a satisfactory solu-



tion. The whole approach to this question has been that a mixed cabinet should be formed and should co-operate together.

“We accepted this. We are not interested in the Congress as such gaining power but we are interested in the Indian people as a whole having freedom and power. How the cabinet should be formed and should function was a question which might have been considered after the main question was decided. That is the extent of the power which the British Government would give up to the Indian people. Because of this we never discussed it with you or even referred to it. Nevertheless, you have raised this matter for the first time, in what is presumably your last letter to us, and treat most unjustifiably to sidetrack the real issue between us.

“You will remember that in my very first talk with you I pointed out that the communal or like questions did not arise at this stage. As soon as the British Government made up its mind to transfer real power and responsibility, the other questions could be tackled successfully by those concerned. You gave me the impression that you agreed with this approach.

“We are convinced that if the British Government did not pursue a policy of encouraging disruption, all of us, to whatever party or group we belonged, would be able to come together and find a common line of action. But, unhappily, even in this grave hour of peril, the British Government is unable to give up its wrecking

policy. We are driven to the conclusion that it attaches more importance to holding on to its rule in India, as long as it can and promoting discord and disruption here with that end in view, than to an effective defence of India against the aggression and invasion that overhang us. To us, and to all Indians, the dominant consideration is the defence and safety of India and it is by that test that we judge."

Sir Stafford Cripps then announced his departure and made off on about the 13th April.

The part played by Mahatma Gandhi in connection with Cripps proposals was very insignificant. He was requested to go to Delhi to interview Sir Stafford on his proposals. Though quite unwilling he did go to New Delhi and had an interview. He examined the proposals in his own way and did not like them. He wanted to go back to Wardha the same day so that in no way he should prejudice the Congress leaders against the proposals but Maulana Sahib would not let him go. He stayed there only for a few days and was not present throughout the negotiations.

Later, on June 28, in Harijan, Gandhiji remarked, "I wish that I could have induced the Working Committee to take up its stand on pure non-violence. But it did not and could not. With it, rightly, politics were important and could not, not having the conviction, allow its deliberations to be affected by the issue of non-violence. The deliberations, therefore, of the Working

Committee at New Delhi were carried on without any interference or guidance on my part. Therefore, the negotiations had nothing to do at any stage with the question of non-violence. I would not have brought out this fact, if it was not relevant to a calm consideration of the situation that faces British and Indian statesmen."

About the Cripps proposals, Gandhiji wrote in Harijan, dated April 19, 1942, "It is a thousand pities that the British Government should have sent a proposal for dissolving the political deadlock, which, on the face of it, was too ridiculous to find acceptance anywhere. And it was a misfortune that the bearer should have been Sir Stafford Cripps, acclaimed as a radical among radicals, and a friend of India. I have no doubt about his goodwill. He believed that no one could have brought anything better for India. But he should have known that at least the Congress would not look at Dominion Status even though it carried the right of secession the very moment it was taken. He knew too that the proposal contemplated the splitting up of India into three parts each having different ideas of governance. It contemplated Pakistan and yet not the Pakistan of the Muslim League's conception. And last of all it give no real control over defence to responsible ministers.

The following is the full text of the resolution passed by the Working Committee of the Indian National Congress on the proposals of the British War Cabinet placed before the Indian Public and public bodies by Sir

Stafford Cripps.

New Delhi, April 11.

The Working Committee have given their full and earnest consideration to the proposals made by the British War Cabinet in regard to India and the elucidation thereof by Sir Stafford Cripps. These proposals, which have been made at the very last hour because of the compulsion of events, have to be considered not only in relation to India's demand for independence, but more especially in the present grave war crises, with a view to meeting effectively the perils and dangers that confront India and envelop the world.

The Congress has repeatedly stated, ever since the commencement of the war in September 1939, that the people of India could line themselves with the progressive forces of the world and assume full responsibility to face the new problems and shoulder the new burdens that had arisen, and it asked for the necessary conditions to enable them to do so to be created. An essential condition was the freedom of India, for only the realisation of present freedom could light the flame which would illumine millions of hearts and move them to action. At the last meeting of the All India Congress Committee, after the commencement of the war in the Pacific it was stated that only a free and independent India can be in a position to undertake the defence of the country on a national basis and be of help in the furtherance of the larger causes that are emerging from the storm of war.

Committee at New Delhi were carried on without any interference or guidance on my part. Therefore, the negotiations had nothing to do at any stage with the question of non-violence. I would not have brought out this fact, if it was not relevant to a calm consideration of the situation that faces British and Indian statesmen."

About the Cripps proposals, Gandhiji wrote in Harijan, dated April 19, 1942, "It is a thousand pities that the British Government should have sent a proposal for dissolving the political deadlock, which, on the face of it, was too ridiculous to find acceptance anywhere. And it was a misfortune that the bearer should have been Sir Stafford Cripps, acclaimed as a radical among radicals, and a friend of India. I have no doubt about his goodwill. He believed that no one could have brought anything better for India. But he should have known that at least the Congress would not look at Dominion Status even though it carried the right of secession the very moment it was taken. He knew too that the proposal contemplated the splitting up of India into three parts each having different ideas of governance. It contemplated Pakistan and yet not the Pakistan of the Muslim League's conception. And last of all it gave no real control over defence to responsible ministers.

The following is the full text of the resolution passed by the Working Committee of the Indian National Congress on the proposals of the British War Cabinet placed before the Indian Public and public bodies by Sir

Stafford Cripps.

New Delhi, April 11.

The Working Committee have given their full and earnest consideration to the proposals made by the British War Cabinet in regard to India and the elucidation thereof by Sir Stafford Cripps. These proposals, which have been made at the very last hour because of the compulsion of events, have to be considered not only in relation to India's demand for independence, but more especially in the present grave war crises, with a view to meeting effectively the perils and dangers that confront India and envelop the world.

The Congress has repeatedly stated, ever since the commencement of the war in September 1939, that the people of India could line themselves with the progressive forces of the world and assume full responsibility to face the new problems and shoulder the new burdens that had arisen, and it asked for the necessary conditions to enable them to do so to be created. An essential condition was the freedom of India, for only the realisation of present freedom could light the flame which would illumine millions of hearts and move them to action. At the last meeting of the All India Congress Committee, after the commencement of the war in the Pacific it was stated that only a free and independent India can be in a position to undertake the defence of the country on a national basis and be of help in the furtherance of the larger causes that are emerging from the storm of war.

## **Full Independence.**

The British war cabinet's new proposals relate principally to the future, upon the cessation of hostilities. The Committee, while recognising that self-determination for the people of India is accepted in principle in that uncertain future, regret that this is fettered and circumscribed and certain provisions have been introduced which gravely imperil the development of a free and united nation and the establishment of a democratic state. Even the constitution-making body is so constituted that the people's right to self-determination is vitiated by the introduction of non-representative elements. The people of India have as a whole clearly demanded full independence and the Congress has repeatedly declared that no other status except that of independence for the whole of India could be agreed to or could meet the essential requirements of the present situation.

## **Negation of Democracy.**

The Committee recognise that future independence may be implicit in the proposals, but the accompanying provisions and restrictions are such that real freedom may well become an illusion. The complete ignoring of the 90 millions of the people of the Indian States and their treatment as commodities at the disposal of their rulers is a negation of both democracy and self-determination. While the representation of an Indian State in the constitution-making body is fixed on a

population basis, the people of the State have no voice in choosing those representatives, nor are they to be consulted at any stage, while decisions vitally affecting them are being taken. Such States may in many ways become barriers to the growth of Indian freedom, enclaves where foreign authority still prevails and where the possibility of maintaining foreign armed forces has been stated to be a likely contingency and a perpetual menace to the freedom of the people of the State as well as of the ruler of India.

### **Blow to Indian Unity.**

The acceptance beforehand of the novel principle of non-accession for a province is also a severe blow to the conception of Indian unity and an apple of discord likely to generate growing trouble in the provinces, and which may well lead to further difficulties in the way of the Indian States merging themselves in the Indian Union.

The Congress has been wedded to India freedom and unity and any break in that unity, especially in the modern world when people's minds inevitably think in terms of ever larger federations, would be injurious to all concerned and exceedingly fearful to contemplate. Nevertheless, the Committee cannot think in terms of compelling the people in any territorial unit to remain in an Indian Union against their declared and established will, while recognising this principle the committee feel that every effort should be made to create conditions which would help the different units in developing a



common and co-operative national life. The acceptancy of the principle inevitably involves that no changes should be made which result in fresh problems being created and compulsions being exercised on their substantial groups within that area. Each territorial unit should have the fullest possible autonomy within the union, consistently with a strong National State. The proposal now made on the part of the British War Cabinet encourages and will lead to attempt at separation at the very inception of a Union and thus create friction just when the utmost co-operative and good-will are most needed. This proposal has been personally made to meet a communal demand but it will have other consequences also and lead politically reactionary and obscurantist groups among different communities to create trouble and divert public attention from the vital issues before the country.

Any proposal concerning the future of India must demand attention and scrutiny, but in to-day's grave crisis, it is the present that counts and even proposals for the future are important in so far as they affect the present.

### **Proposals vague and incomplete.**

The Committee have necessarily attached the greatest importance to this aspect of the question, and on this ultimately depends what advice they should give to those who look to them for guidance. For the present the British war Cabinet's proposals are vague and altogether incomplete and it would appear that no vital changes

in the present structure are contemplated. It has been made clear that defence of India will in any event remain under British Control. At any time defence is a vital subject, during the war-time it is all important and covers almost every sphere of life and administration. To take away defence from the sphere of responsibility at this stage is to reduce that responsibility to a farce and a nullity, and to make it perfectly clear that India is not going to be free in any way and her Government is not going to function as a free and independent Government during the pendency of that war. The Committee would repeat that an essential and fundamental prerequisite for the assumption of responsibility by the Indian people in the present, is their realisation as a fact that they are free and are in charge of maintaining and defending their freedom. *What is most wanted is the enthusiastic response of the people which cannot be evoked without the fullest trust in them and the devolution of responsibility on them in the matter of defence.* It is only thus that even at this grave eleventh hour it may be possible to galvanise the people of India to rise to the height of the occasion. It is manifest that the present Government of India, as well as its provincial agencies, are lacking in competence, and are incapable of shouldering the burden of India's defence. It is only the people of India, through their popular representatives who may shoulder this burden worthily. But that can only be done by present freedom, and full responsibility being cast upon them.

The Committee, therefore, is unable to accept the proposals put forward on behalf of the British War Cabinet."

The matter was further discussed in the session of A.I.C.C. and the following resolution was passed in April 1928.

In view of the imminent peril of invasion that confronts India and the attitude of the British Government as shown again in the recent proposals sponsored by Sir Stafford Cripps, the All-India Congress Committee has to declare afresh India's policy and to advise the people in regard to the action to be undertaken in the emergencies that may arise in the immediate future.

The proposals of the British Government and their subsequent elucidation by Sir Stafford Cripps have led to great bitterness and distrust of that Government and the spirit of non-co-operation with British has grown.

They have demonstrated that even in this hour of danger not only to India but to the cause of the United Nations the British Government functions as an imperialist Government and refuses to recognise the independence of India or to part with any real power.

India's participation in the war was a purely British act imposed upon the Indian people without the consent of their representatives while India has no quarrel with the people of any country. She has repeatedly declared her antipathy of Nazism and Fascism as to Imperialism. If India were free, she would have determined her own

policy and might have kept out of the war, though her sympathies would in any event have been with the victims of aggression. If, however, circumstances had led her to join the war she would have done so as a free country fighting for freedom, and her defence would have been organised on a popular basis with a national army under national control and leadership and with intimate contacts with the people. A free India would know how to defend herself in the event of any aggressor attacking her.

The present Indian army is in fact an offshoot of the British army and has been maintained till now mainly to hold India under subjection. It has been completely segregated from the general population, who can in no sense regard it as their own.

### **Foreign Armies In India**

The essential differences between the imperialist and the popular conception of defence is demonstrated by the fact that while foreign armies are invited to India for that defence, the vast manpower of India herself is not utilised for the purpose. India's past reference teaches her that it is harmful to her interest and dangerous to her cause of freedom to introduce foreign armies in India. It is significant and extraordinary that India's inexhaustible manpower should remain untapped, while India develops into a battle ground between foreign armies fighting on her soil or her frontiers, and her defence is not supposed to be a subject fit for popular control.

India resents this treatment of her people as chattels to be disposed of by foreign country.

The A.I.C.C. is convinced that India will attain her freedom through her own strength and will retain it likewise. The present crisis as well as the experience of the negotiations with Sir Stafford Cripps make it impossible for the Congress to consider any schemes or proposals which retain even in a partial manner British control and authority in India. Not only the interests of India but also Britain's safety and world peace and freedom demand that Britain must abandon her hold on India. It is on the basis of independence alone that India can deal with Britain or other nations.

The Committee repudiates the idea that freedom can come to India through interference or invasion by any foreign nation, whatever the professions of that nation may be. In case any invasion takes place it must be resisted. Such resistance can only take the form of non-violent non-co-operation as the British Government has prevented the organization of national defence by the people in any other way. The Committee would, therefore, expect the people of India to offer complete non-violent non-co-operation to the invading forces and not to render any assistance to them.

We may not bend the knee to the aggressor nor obey any of his orders. We may not look to him for favours nor fall to his bribes. If he wishes to take possession of our homes and our fields, we will refuse

to gives them up even if we were to die in the effort to resist him.

In places wherein the British and the invading forces are fighting our non-co-operation will be fruitless and unnecessary. Not to put any obstacle in the way of British forces will often be the only way of demonstrating our non-co-operation with the invader. Judging from their attitude the British Government do not need any help from us beyond our non-interference.

The success of such a policy of non-co-operation and non-violent resistance to the invader will largely depend on the intensive working out of Congress constructive programme of self-sufficiency and self-protection in all parts of the country.

The Sikhs even rejected the proposals. They said : "Instead of maintaining and strengthening the integrity of India, specific provision has been made for separation of provinces and the constitution of Pakistan and the cause of the Sikhs has been lamentably betrayed."

The Muslim League even rejected the proposals mainly for two reasons, (1) there is no unequivocal acceptance of the principle of Pakistan by means of a proper machinery, and (2) about the interim arrangement there is no complete picture available.

But the Cripps proposal has been one of the most unfortunate episodes in the history of India. Sir Cripps was sent to India within three weeks of the great

appeal of General Chiang Kai-Shek for some real power to India when she was seriously threatened by a Japanese invasion, in hot haste, by an aeroplane. The proposal was such that had to be rejected by all. The Congress leaders tried to make the best of it out of their sheer anxiety for the defence of their country. But to no purpose. It made all Indians sad and melancholy. It made Gandhiji most anxious and contemplative. The Cripps proposal served as starting point for the contemplated conflict between the country and the British Government. It would have been infinitely better if Cripps did not come to India to rouse any false hope or serious misgivings in the Indian mind.

The real inner meaning of the Cripps mission remains a mystery even to this day. Louis Fisher, an American journalist, in his Sans Fransisco speech has thrown some light on it and has shown how Mr. Churchill killed two birds with one stone. Unfortunately his speech cannot be reproduced *in toto* or in part as the Government has banned it. The speech was published in Indian papers on May 25, 1943.

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## CHAPTER IV

### Preparing the Atmosphere

It has been said before that Mahatma called the Cripps offer as a post-dated cheque and it was clear from the report of his interview with Sir Stafford Cripps that he was not at all happy over it. After his interview he became more contemplative, apprehensive and decisive. At this time there was an unending stream of foreign soldiers, English, Americans, Australians, Chinese and New Zealanders, in India. This made Gandhiji all the more anxious and doubtful about the intentions of the British Government regarding India. He began to ruminate over the problem of safety and independence of India in the light of imminent Japanese aggression and the intentions of the British Government towards India much more intensely and seriously than ever before. Current after current of ideas came into his mind and he began putting them down in his *Harijan*. It is significant to know the state of his mind, then, which gradually cleared up. Thus he wrote in his *Harijan* dated April 26, under the head-line, 'Foreign Soldiers In India.'

"Among the multitude of questions contained in my correspondence is the one referring to the advent of foreign soldiers in India. We have foreign prisoners even. Now we have a promise of a never-ending



stream of soldiers from America and possibly China. I must confess that I do not look upon this event with equanimity. Cannot a limitless number of soldiers be trained out of India's millions? Would they not make as good fighting material as any in the world? Then why foreigners? We know what American aid means. It amounts in the end to American influence, if not American rule added to British. It is a tremendous price to pay for the possible success of Allied arms. I see no Indian freedom peeping through all this preparation for the so-called defence of India. It is a preparation pure and simple for the defence of the British Empire, whatever may be asserted to the contrary. If the British left India to her fate as they had to leave Singapore, non-violent India would not lose anything. Probably the Japanese would leave India alone. Perhaps, India, if the main parties composed their differences as they probably would, would be able effectively to help China in the way of peace and in the long run even play a decisive part in the promotion of the world peace. But all these happy things may not happen, if the British will leave India only when they must. How much more creditable, how much braver it would be for Britain to offer battle in the West and leave the East to adjust her own position! There is no guarantee that she will be able to protect, during this war, all her vast possessions. They have become a dead weight round her. If she wisely loosens herself from this weight and the Nazis, the Fascists or the Japanese

instead of leaving India alone choose to subjugate her, they will find that they have to hold more than they can in their iron hoop. They will find it much more difficult than Britain has. Their very rigidity will struggle them. The British system had an elasticity which served so long as it had no powerful rivals. British elasticity is of no help to-day. I have said more than once in these columns that the Nazi power had risen as a nemesis to punish Britain for her sins of exploitation and enslavement of the Asiatic and African races.

Whatever the consequences, therefore, to India, her real safety and Britain's too lie in orderly and timely British withdrawal from India. All talk of treaties with the Princes and obligations towards minorities are a British creation designed for the preservation of British interests. It must melt before the stern reality that faces all of us. Princes, in so far as they rely upon their armed strength, are more than all to defend themselves against unarmed India. The fiction of majority and minority will vanish like the mist before the morning sun of liberty. Truth to tell there will be neither majority nor minority in the absence of the paralysing British arms. The millions of India would then be an undefined but one mass of humanity. I have no doubt that at that time the natural leaders will have wisdom enough to evolve an honourable solution of their difficulties. This pre-supposes Japan and other powers leaving India alone. If they do not I should hope even

then for wisdom to guide the principal parties to devise a scheme whereby they can act with one mind to face the new menace.

Holding the views I do, it is clear why I look upon the introduction of foreign soldiers as a positive danger thoroughly to be deplored and distrusted. The present state of things and the attempt to uphold it as a distinct sign of corroding consumption of the body politic in India."

An inference drawn in this article by Mahtma Gandhi that the defence of India as planned by the British is a preparation to defend her Empire, is exactly the same what Mr. Churchill hinted at in his speech in the House of Commons on November 10, 1942 and June 1943.

In the same issue to a question, 'If the Japanese really mean what they say and are willing to help to free India from the British yoke, why should we not willingly accept their help?' he gave the following reply :—

"It is folly to suppose that aggressors can ever be benefactors. The Japanese may free India from the British yoke, but only to put in their own instead. I have always maintained that we should not seek any other Power's help to free India from the British yoke. That would not be a non-violent approach. We should have to pay a heavy price, if we ever consented to take foreign aid as against the British. By our non-violent action we were within an ace of reaching our goal. I

cling to my faith in non-violence. I have no enmity against the Japanese, but I cannot contemplate with equanimity their designs upon India. Why do they not realise that we as free men have no quarrel with them? Let them leave India alone. And if they are well-intentioned, what has China done to deserve the devastation they have wrought there?"

Then on May 8 to a question 'Are you not inviting the Japanese to attack India by asking the British rulers to withdraw?' he gave the following reply :—

"I am not. I feel convinced that the British presence is the incentive for the Japanese attack. If the British wisely decided to withdraw and leave India to manage her own affairs in the best way she could, the Japanese would be bound to reconsider their plans. The very novelty of the British stroke will confound the Japanese, dissolve the subdued hatred against the British and the atmosphere will be set up for the ending of an unnatural state of things that has dominated and choked Indian life. As far as I can see the Japanese seem to have made their plans independently of Indian opinion. They are not to be affected by any writing of mine. But they will be confounded by the action I have advised the British to take."

Then he wrote in May 17 issue of the *Harijan* under the heading, 'To Every Briton.'

"I ask every Briton to support me in my appeal to the British at this very hour to retire from every Asiatic and

African possession and at least from India. That step is essential for the safety of the world and for the destruction of Nazism and Fascism. In this I include Japan's issue also. It is a good copy of the two. Acceptance of my appeal will confound all the military plans of all the Axis Powers and even of the military advisers of Great Britain.

If my appeal goes home, I am sure the cost of the British interests in India and Africa would be nothing compared to the present ever-growing cost of the war to Britain. And when one puts morals in the scales, there is nothing but gain to Britain, India and the world.

Though I ask for their withdrawal from Asia and Africa, let me confine myself for the moment to India. British statesmen talk glibly of India's participation in the war. Now India was never formally consulted on the declaration of war. Why should it be? India does not belong to Indians. It belongs to the British. It has been even called a British possession. The British practically do with it as they like. They make me, an all war resister, pay a war tax in a variety of ways. Thus I pay two pice as war tax on every letter I post, one pice on every post card, and two annas on every wire I send. This is the lightest side of the dismal picture. But it shows British ingenuity. If I was a student of economics, I could produce startling figures as to what India has been made to pay towards the war apart from what are called voluntary contributions. No contribution made to a conqueror can be truly described as voluntary. What a conqueror the Britain

makes ! She is well saddled in her seat. I do not exaggerate when I say that a whisper of his wish is promptly answered in India. Britain may, therefore, be said to be at perpetual war with India, which she holds by right of conquest and through an army of occupation. How does India profit by this enforced participation in British war ? The bravery of Indian soldiers profits India nothing.

Before the Japanese menace overtakes India, India's homesteads are being occupied by British troops—Indian and non-Indian. The dwellers are summarily ejected and expected to shift for themselves. They are paid a paltry vacating expense which carries them nowhere. Their occupation is gone. They have to build their cottages and search for their livelihood. These people do not vacate out of a spirit of patriotism. When this incident was referred to me a few days ago, I wrote in the columns that the dispersed people should be asked to bear their own lot with resignation. But my co-workers protested and invited me to go to the evacuees and console them myself or send someone to perform the impossible task. They were right. These poor people should never have been treated as they were. They should have been lodged suitably at the same time that they were asked to vacate.

People in East Bengal may almost be regarded as amphibious. They live partly on the waters of the rivers. They have light canoes which enable them to go from place to place. For fear of Japanese using the canoes the people have been called

upon to surrender them. For a Bengali, to part with his canoe, is almost like parting with his life. To those who take away his canoe he regards as his enemy.

Great Britain has to win the war. Need she do so at India's expense ? Should she do so ?

But I have something more to add to this sad chapter. The falsity that envelopes Indian life is suffocating. Almost every Indian you meet is discontented. But he will not own it publicly. The Government employees, high and low, are no exception. I am not giving hearsay evidence. Many British officials know this but they have evolved the art of taking work from such elements. This all-pervading distrust and falsity make life worthless unless one resists it with one's whole soul.

You may refuse to believe all I say. Of course I shall be contradicted. I shall survive the contradictions.

I have stated what I believe to be the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth.

My people may or may not approve of this loud thinking. I have consulted nobody. This appeal is being written during my silence day. I am just now concerned with Britain's action. When slavery was abolished in America many slaves protested, some even wept. But protests and tears notwithstanding, slavery was abolished in the land. But the abolition was the result of a bloody war between the south and the north ;

and so though the Negro's lot is considerably better than before, he still remains the outcaste of high society. I am asking for something much higher. I ask for a bloodless end of an unnatural domination and for a new era, even though there may be protests and wailings from some of us."

Again on May 31 Mahatma wrote in *Harijan* under the heading 'Friendly Advice' :—

Thus reasons a friend :

Most people will agree with you that Britain's inability to play fair by India deprives them of the right to expect even our moral support. Ideologically also most people will agree with you that their only honourable course would be to withdraw from India. But inevitably the withdrawal will confront us with immense difficulties which you yourself have admitted. You say you are willing to take all risks. Every brave man is. At the same time is it not your duty to prepare the ground up to a point so as to minimise the risks as far as possible? The people must, for instance, be made to shed cowardice and feel that it is possible for us to stand on our own legs. *They must not desire, as so many do, Japanese help or even submit to Japanese domination as they would have to, if that help were taken.* They must be weaned, as far as possible, from hatred of the British. And their every effort must be made to secure Muslim support. This is your last and supreme effort to bring freedom to India. Let no step be taken in haste or without due preparation. The time is too critical to bear



failure.

As these columns show, with the overwhelming sense of the truth as it appears to me. I am taking every care humanly possible to prepare the ground. I know that the novelty of the idea and that too at this juncture has caused a shock to many people. But I could not help myself. Even at the risk of being called mad, I had to tell the truth if I was to be true to myself. I regard it as my solid contribution to the war and to India's deliverance from the peril that is threatening. It is my real contribution to communal unity. No one can visualize what it will be like. Only it will not be the shame we have had up to now. It has touched only the few politically minded people. The masses have remained unaffected by it.

Whilst therefore I will take every imaginable care consistently with the urgency, I cannot guarantee freedom from cowardice before taking any forward step. The cowardice will probably not be shed without much travail. Nor is waiting possible till hatred abates. Withdrawal of the hated power is the only way to rid the land of the debasing hatred. The cause gone, hatred must cease.

*Of course the people must not on any account lean on the Japanese to get rid of the British power. That were a remedy worse than the disease. But as I have already said, in this struggle every risk has to be run in order to cure ourselves of the biggest disease—a*

disease which has sapped our manhood and almost made us feel as if we must for ever be slaves. It is an unsufferable thing. The cost of the cure, I know, will be heavy. No price is too heavy to pay for the deliverance.

Again answering to a question of a press correspondent whether his present policy as revealed by his writings did not vitiate his own declaration that he was a friend of China, Gandhiji said in June 7 issue of the *Harijan* :

“ My answer is an emphatic no. I remain the passionate friend of China that I have always claimed to be. I know what loss of freedom means. Therefore I could not but be in sympathy with China, which is my next close neighbour in distress. And if I believed in violence and, if I could influence, I would put in motion every force at my command on behalf of China to save her liberty. In making therefore the suggestion, which I have made about withdrawal of British power, I have not lost sight of China. But because I have China in mind, I feel that the only effective way for India to help China is to persuade Great India and let a free India make to the war effort. Instead of being splintered, free India will be a mighty force for the good of mankind in general. It is true that the solution I have presented is a heroic solution beyond the ken of Englishmen. But being a true friend of Britain and China

V.R. NARAYAN  
D.P.R.I.  
Acc. No.

and Russia, I must not suppress the solution which I believe to be eminently practical and probably the only one in order to save the situation and in order to avert the war into a power for good instead of being what it is, a peril to humanity."

Again to a suggestion that he had turned pro-Japanese Gandhiji wrote in the same issue under the heading 'I am not Pro-Japanese.' :—

"I could only laugh at the suggestion. I am sincere in my passion for freedom. I could not consciously or unconsciously take a step which will involve India in the position of merely changing masters. If, in spite of my resistance to the Japanese menace with my whole soul, the mishap occurs, of which I have never denied the possibility, then, the blame would rest wholly on British shoulders. I have no shadow of doubt about it. I have made no suggestion which, even from the military standpoint, is fraught with the slightest danger to British power or to the Chinese. It is obvious that India is not allowed to pull her weight in favour of China. If British power is withdrawn from India in an orderly manner, Britain will be relieved of the burden of keeping the peace in India and at the same time gain in a free India an ally not in the cause of Empire—because she would have renounced *in toto* all her imperial designs, but in a defence not pretended but wholly real, of human freedom. That I assert and that only is the burden of my recent writings and I shall

continue to do so long as I am allowed by the British power."

Then to a question, 'You are reported to have matured plans for launching some big offensive ; what about your plan ?' Gandhiji in the same issue wrote under the heading 'No Secrecy.' " Well. I have never believed in secrecy nor do I do so now. There are certainly many plans floating in my brain. But just now I merely allow them to float in my brain. My first task is to educate the public mind in India and world opinion in so far as I am allowed to do so. And when I have finished that process to my satisfaction, I may have to do something. That something may be very big if the Congress is with me and the people are with me. But British authority will have a knowledge of anything I may work to do before I enforce it. Remember I have yet to see the Maulana Sahib. My talks with Pandit Nehru are yet unfinished. I may say that they were wholly of a friendly nature and we have come nearer to each other even with the unfinished talk of yesterday. Naturally I want to carry the whole of the Congress with me if I can, as I want to carry the whole of India with me. For my conception of freedom is no narrow conception. It is co-extensive with the freedom of man in all his majesty. I shall, therefore, take no step without the fullest deliberation. "

Again in the same issue under the heading 'To Resist Slave Drivers' Gandhiji in answering the question 'But have we not to see that the remedy may not be

worse than the disease ? There will be in the course of the resistance in spite of all our will to prevent them, clashes and resultant anarchy. May not that anarchy be worse than the present anarchy which you have called ordered anarchy ?' gave the following reply :—

“ That is a very proper question. That is the consideration that has weighed with me all these 22 years. I waited and waited until the country should develop the non-violent strength necessary to throw off the foreign yoke. But my attitude has now undergone a change. I feel that I cannot afford to wait. If I continue to wait I might have to till doomsday. For the preparation that I have prayed for and worked for may never come, and in the meantime I may be enveloped and overwhelmed by the flames that threaten all of us. That is why I have decided that even at certain risks which are obviously involved I must ask the people to resist the slavery. But even that readiness, let me assure you, depends on the non-violent man's unflinching faith. All I am conscious of is that there is not a trace of violence in the remotest corner of my being, and my conscious pursuit of ahimsa for the last 50 years cannot easily fail me at this crisis. The people have not my ahimsa, but mine should help them. There is ordered anarchy around and about us. I am sure that the anarchy that may result because of the British withdrawal or their refusal to listen to us and our decision to deny their authority will in no way be worse than the present anarchy. After all, those who are unarmed

cannot produce a rightful ammount of violence or anarchy, and I have a faith that out of that anarchy may arise pure non-violence. And to be passive witness of the terrible violence that is going on, in the name of resisting a possible aggression, is a thing that I cannot stand. It is a thing that would make me ashamed of my ahimsa. It is made of sterner stuff.

“I know that what I am saying to-day is not easy to understand. Language is but a poor vehicle of one's thoughts. What I have said is bound to suffer from the limitations of that vehicle. But I want you to ponder coolly over what I have been saying and writing, and perhaps you will be able to understand me. I am also sure that those who cannot or will not understand will do so in the light of experience, *i.e.*, if they survive the present catastrophe.”

By the time almost the whole of Burma had fallen to the Japanese. The Indians that were in Burma and notably in the city of Rangoon, had to evacuate under military orders. Regarding the manner in which the evacuation was forced the A. I. C. C. passed a resolution on April 28, which along with another resolution that dealt with the alleged molestation of women by soldiers was banned from publication. The notification of the ban on the publication of the A. I. C. C. resolution was issued in a *Gazette of India Extraordinary* as follows :—

“In exercise of the powers conferred by Clause (B) of Sub-rule (1) of Rule 41 of the Defence of India

Rules, the Central Government is pleased to prohibit the printing or publication, by any writer, publisher or editor in British India, of the whole or any portion of the resolution of the Working Committee of the Indian National Congress adopted at Allahabad on the 28th April 1942, beginning with the words, "The Committee has noted the recent extraordinary happenings in Burma and notably in the city of Rangoon" and ending with the words "in particular all pains should be avoided even though those in authority give way to it."  
—A.P.

Another Press Note says :—

"The Government of India have to-day issued a *Gazette Extraordinary* prohibiting under the Defence of India Rule 41 (1) (B), the publication of that portion of the second resolution of the Working Committee of the Indian National Congress adopted to-day at Allahabad which deals with the alleged molestation of women by soldiers."

Regarding these resolutions, the Secretary of State for India, Mr. Amery, said in the Commons on May 7, "that they (the resolutions) were calculated—and to judge by their language, were, I think, deliberately calculated—to undermine public confidence in the Government and the armed forces."

About this the Congress President issued the following statement :—

"The statement of Mr. L. S. Amery about the learned resolutions of the Congress Working Committee though

surprisingly irresponsible, has evoked no feeling of surprise in me. We are now sufficiently accustomed to hear such things.

“Replying to a question Mr. Amery said : ‘These resolutions which were reached on gross non-representation of facts or on unverified rumours criticized in unbridled terms the recent actions of the military and civil authorities in India and Burma. They were calculated—and to judge by their language, were, I think, deliberately calculated—to undermine public confidence in the Government and the armed forces.’

“But I affirm with the fullest sense of responsibility that not a single phase of the resolution is either based on unverified rumours or misrepresented facts. Whatever it said is based on solid facts derived from the most responsible and reliable sources.

“Regarding the last charge I would like to say, how could the Congress attempt to undermine a thing which does not exist. But the confidence can easily be created at least in this matter, if the Government of India is prepared to adopt a simple course. Neither any member of the Congress Working Committee nor myself have any desire to insist on the occurrence of the deplorable facts mentioned in the resolution about Malaya and Burma.”

### **AZAD'S OFFER**

“ I would be the first man to welcome the non-occurrence of the events, if any of them is proved to be incorrect or based on rumours. I, therefore, ask the Government



whether it is prepared to let me know what parts of its resolutions are based on unverified rumours or misrepresented facts ; and give me a chance to lay information which I have in my possession before it ? If it is prepared to adopt this course and convince me that our information is incorrect, I could unhesitatingly express regret on behalf of the Working Committee, and withdraw the resolutions.

“Are the Government of India and the Secretary of State prepared to accept this offer ?”.....*A. P.*

To clear the matters up further there was a meeting between Mahatma Gandhi, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru at Sewagram. About the same meeting and in connection with a recent statement of Sir Stafford Cripps, referring to a struggle in India between the principles of violence and non-violence, Maulana Azad gave the following exclusive interview to the United Press for its London Subscribers :—

“I do not know what Sir Stafford Cripps means by the struggle between the principles of violence and non-violence. We are not at all philosophising over the merits of violence or non-violence. The centre of all our attention at present is how to defend India successfully against the invader who is knocking at the door, and we are convinced that the only way to achieve this end is that India becomes independent without delay.

During the Wardha talk last week, I particularly asked Gandhiji about the application of non-violence under the present circumstances. I am happy to say that this

aspect of the problem is quite clear in his mind. As a man of action he cannot ignore the conditions prevailing around him. He told me that his personal views about non-violence need not be re-enunciated and his position remained unchanged, but at the same time he knew that it was not the position of the Congress, nor other parties, nor of the majority of Indian people which considers defence to be armed defence only. Therefore, if a free National Government was established in India, with an understanding to defend her against the invader, it was obvious that it could be only an armed defence, not a non-violent one."

At this time the atmosphere was full of talk on Gandhiji's views. The newspapers in India, as well as abroad were freely discussing them. A leader in the *London Times* attacked Gandhiji as follows :—

"This is the moment chosen by Mr. Gandhi for a lead which will doubtless be passed home at the meeting of the working committee next month to reassert his personal policy and prestige within the ranks of the Congress Party. Such an attempt cannot in the long run succeed.

"Mr. Gandhiji's personal integrity can no longer mask retrograde character of his political doctrine. Anarchic romanticism offers no basis for political action in an industrialised and militarised world. To follow the lead of Mr. Gandhi would mean to separate India not merely from the company of free nations standing together east and west to resist aggression and tyranny but from the

whole economic development of modern times the world over.

‘Mr. Gandhi’s policy does not, however, empty it of its powers for mischief. It has already bewildered and divided Congress opinion in a way which prevents the Congress party from following any constructive course whatever and drives back upon an attitude of protest and negation.

‘Mr. Gandhi’s proposals, if they could be translated into practice, would make India an immediate prey not only of internal disruption but of external assault of the most ruthless character.

‘There is plenty of room for discussion between the British and the Indian about ways and means of defending India. There is no room for discussion with those who agree that India should not be defended at all or who delude themselves and others into imagining that methods of boycott and non-violent resistance, sometimes successfully employed in time of peace to embarrass an administration, imbued with liberal and humanitarian conceptions, would avail them against the armies of Japan flushed with victory, practised in cruelty and flushed with lust for imperial domination.

‘Great Britain takes her stand firmly on the Cripps proposals and will not recede from them. They constituted and still constitute an immense moral asset to the British cause.

‘Those who seek the freedom of India know in their

heart that Mr. Gandhi's policy means no freedom but enslavement to Japan. The essence of the British plan is an offer and guarantee of immediate effective control over day-to-day administration in India and of independence, as complete as the people of India desire to make it, once the aggressor is repelled'.....*Reuter*

This shows that despite so much effort and clarification on his part some of responsible Britishers even have either not yet understood and appreciated the view point of Gandhiji or they have fundamental differences with him regarding his policy and are, therefore, making such senseless attacks on him. To this Gandhiji gave the following reply on June 22 :—

“I regard my proposal as foolproof. Any person, however great he may be, who distorts the proposals I have made will be condemned by history as an enemy of the Allied cause. It is an insult to India to repeat the Stafford Cripps proposals which were rejected by all parties, as the final work of British statesmanship.

“Every time Nationalists have suggested solutions, however sound intrinsically, there has been a distortion of their speeches and writings followed later by persecution. My latest proposal conceived in the friendliest spirit and, in my opinion, intrinsically sound has already begun to be distorted. I regard my proposal fool-proof. Operations of the Allied forces against Japanese aggression have been left intact under my

proposal, which amounts to this, that Britain should become true to her declarations, withdraw from India as conqueror and, therefore, controller of her destiny, and leave India to shape her own destiny without the slightest interference. This as I can see, puts her cause on a moral basis and gives her in India a great ally not in the cause of Imperialism, but in the cause of human freedom. If there is anarchy in India, Britain alone will be responsible, not I, what I said is that I would prefer anarchy to the present slavery and consequent impotence of India."—*A.P.*

To the same criticism of the *Times* the *Modern Review* says in July issue :—

"Let us make a statement. Those 'who seek the freedom of India' know in their heart the acceptance of the Cripps proposals means not freedom but the vivisection of India and the indefinite propagation of subjection to Britain. The essence of the British plan is the show of an offer and guarantee of immediate ineffective control over day-to-day administration in India minus the least voice in the matters of Defence and Foreign Affairs, no control over finance, and no such self-rule as the people of India desire to take it."

Mahatma Gandhi then discussed a number of questions in his *Harijan* dated June 14, under the heading 'Important Questions' bearing on his policy. They are as follows :—

**Q.** You ask the British Government to withdraw immediately from India. Would Indians thereupon form

**a national Government and what groups or parties would participate in such an Indian Government ?**

**Ans.** My proposal is one sided, i.e., for the British Government to act upon, wholly irrespective of what Indians would do or what would not do. I have even assured temporary chaos on their withdrawal. But if the withdrawal takes place in an orderly manner, it is likely that on their withdrawal a Provisional Government will be set up by and from amongst the present leaders. But another thing may also happen. All those who have no thought of the nation but only of themselves may make a bid for power and get together the turbulent forces with which they would seek to gain control somewhere and somehow. I should also hope that with the complete, final and honest withdrawal of the British power the wise leaders will realise their responsibility, forget their differences for the moment and set up a Provisional Government out of the material left by the British power. As there would be no power regulating the admission or rejection of parties or persons to or from the council board, restraint only will be the guide. If that happens probably the Congress, the League and the States representatives will be allowed to function and they will come to a loose understanding on the formation of a Provisional National Government. All this is necessarily guess work and nothing more.

**Q. 2.** Would [that Indian National Government,

permit the United Nations to use Indian territory as a base of military operations against Japan and the Axis powers?

*Ans.* Assuming that the national government is formed and if it answers any expectations the first act would be to enter into a treaty with the United Nations for defensive operations against aggressive powers, it being common cause that India will have nothing to do with any of the Fascist powers and India would be morally bound to help the United Nations.

**Q. 3.** What further assistance would this Indian National Government be ready to render the United Nations in the course of the present war against the Fascist aggressors?

*Ans.* If I have any hand in guiding the imagined national government, there would be no further assistance save the toleration of the United Nations on the Indian soil under well-defined conditions. Naturally there would be no prohibition against any Indian giving his own personal help by way of being a recruit or of giving financial aids. It should be understood that the Indian army has been disbanded with the withdrawal of British power. Again if I have any say in the councils of the national government, all its power, prestige and resources would be used towards bringing about world peace. But of course after the formation of the national government my voice may be voice in the wilderness and nationalist India may go war-mad.

**Q. 4.** Do you believe this collaboration between India and the Allied powers might or should be formulated in a treaty of alliance or an agreement for mutual aid ?

**Ans.** I think the question is altogether premature and in any case it will not much matter whether the relations are regulated by treaty or agreement. I do not even see any difference.

Let me sum up my attitude. One thing and only one thing for me is solid and certain. This unnatural prostration of a great nation—it is neither ‘nations’ nor ‘peoples’—must cease if the victory of the Allies is ensured. They lack the moral basis. I see no difference between the Fascist and Nazi powers and the Allies. All are exploiters, all resort to ruthlessness to the extent required to compass their end. America and Britain are very great nations, but their greatness will count as dust before the bar of dumb humanity, whether African or Asiatic. They and they alone have the power to undo the wrong. They have no right to talk of human liberty and all else they have washed their hands clean of the pollution. That necessary wash will be the surest insurance of success, for they will have the good wishes—unexpected but no less certain—of millions of dumb Asiatics and Africans. Then, but not till then, will they be fighting for a new order. This is the reality. All else is speculation. I have allowed myself, however, to indulge in it as a test of my *bona fides* and for the sake of explaining in a concrete manner what I mean by my proposal.



To further clear up his scheme Mahatma Gandhi wrote an article in the *Harijan* dated July 5th under heading "Oh ! the troops" as follows :—

"I have to pay a heavy price for having drawn up an entrancing picture of a free India without a single British soldier. Friends are confounded now to discover that my proposal admits of the presence of British and even American troops under any circumstances at all. In vain do I argue that the Allied troops, if they remain will do so not to exercise authority over the people, or at India's expense, but under treaty with the Government of Free India at the United Nations' expense for the sole purpose of repelling Japanese attack and helping China.

It has been pointed out that not to consent to the Allied troops remaining in India during the period of the war is to hand over India and China to Japan and to ensure the defeat of the Allied powers.' This could never have been contemplated by me. The only answer, therefore, to give was to suffer the presence of the troops but under circumstances the reverse of the existing. They will remain under permission of Free India and not at all in the role of masters but friends.

My proposal presupposes shedding of all fear and distrust. If we have confidence in ourselves, we need neither fear nor suspect the presence of Allied troops.

May I suggest also that it is altogether premature and wrong to pore over the weakest points of a very difficult project which may not be accepted even with troops

remaining in India. It will be most assuredly an event of the century and may be a turning point in the war if Britain can honestly perform the act of renouncing India with all that renunciation would mean. The virtue and the value of renunciation in my opinion will not be affected in the least because the Allied troops will be operating in India with the sole object of preventing Japanese attack. After all India is so much interested as the Allies in warding off the attack and yet under my proposal India will not have to pay a single pie over the expenses of the troops.

The British acceptance of my proposal may itself lead to a most honourable peace and hence automatic withdrawal of the troops. I would, therefore, ask the doubters to concentrate their attention upon the grandeur of the proposed renunciation and help to the utmost of their power the fruition of the great act. Let them not dread the presence of the troops in India for the purpose indicated but regard it as inevitable part of the proposal so as to make it not only justifiable but fool-proof so far as I can see. Free India will run no risk by the presence. Her freedom will certainly suffer by no domination thereby.

The implications of my proposal are :—

- (1) India becomes free from all financial obligations to Britain.
- (2) The annual drain to Great Britain stops automatically.

(3) All taxation ceases except what the replacing Government imposes or retains.

(4) The dead weight of an all-powerful authority keeping under subjection the tallest in the land is lifted at once.

(5) In short, India begins a new chapter in her national life, as I shall hope to affect the fortunes of the war with non-violence as her predominant sanctions. This non-violence will no longer take the shape of non-co-operation and the like. It will express itself in her ambassadors going to the Axis powers not to beg for peace but to show them the futility of war for achieving an honourable end. This can only be done if and when Britain sheds the gains of perhaps the most organised and successful violence the world has seen.

All this may not come to pass. I do not mind. It is worth fighting for, it is worth staking all that the nation has.

This is the channel in which Mahatma Gandhi's mind was working. This is the argument.

It is regretted that the treatment has become rather long. But to grasp the real situation it was absolutely essential. These articles and answers to their questions illustrate Mahatma Gandhi. They bring out his real meaning and show how clear is his brain and how convincing are his arguments. He clearly visualises the whole picture and pens it. It is most unfortunate that the Government have cited some excerpts from articles and answers torn from their context as most objec-

tionable and of revolutionary character. But the saddle is on a wrong horse. Rather Mahatma Gandhi deserves immense praise for his sincerity of purpose and clearness of views. He makes no secret of his views. He is keen on resisting the Fascist and Japanese aggression, but holds that it is possible and desirable only if the British Imperialism, at least in India, is finished.

The articles require no explanation. They are plain English and speak for themselves. They admit of no inner meaning. He who distorts them will be condemned by history. The argument needs only be summed up.

(1) The never-ending stream of foreign soldiers in India, instead of mobilising the Indian man-power, shows that Britain wants to hold India for the Imperial designs.

(2) In the name of meeting the imminent Japanese invasion many hardships by way of taxations and confiscations have been inflicted on Indians.

(3) To resist the Japanese menace is not only the work of Britain but also of India herself. India should not hope for any helpful treatment from Japan.

(4) The defence of India can best be done if Indians are entrusted and feel that they are free and are fighting for their home and hearth and not for the British Imperialism and their perpetual subjection. This is the best and essential aid to China.

(5) For the purpose the British power must with-

draw from India in a friendly way and not wait till they are ejected out by Japan. This will be to the destruction of both Britain and India.

(6) Even if there be anarchy in India as a result of the withdrawal of British power that will be only short-lived, as all parties will soon come to a common understanding.

(7) To resist the Japanese, even if British power is withdrawn, the British troops may remain there, but maintained at the expenses of the Allied nations and they will remain there till the period of the war and as friends of India, and not as masters.

(8) India will raise an armed defence with her millions and be a powerful Ally of the United Nations.

(9) India will then send her ambassadors to the Axis powers, not to beg for peace, but to show them the futility of the war for achieving an honourable end. But this can only be done if and when Britain sheds the gains of perhaps the most organised and successful violence the world has seen.

(10) In case Britain does not withdraw, which means that she is fighting only for Imperial designs and not to meet Japanese aggression, then for the sake of India and China, he will make big offensive, as soon as possible, regardless of what little may happen in India, in the most non-violent and open way.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **THE CALL IS SOUNDED**

The Congress Working Committee then met at Wardha on July 6. Gandhiji explained there his views and proposals to the members of the working committee.

Gandhiji then presented the draft resolution which the working committee passed with some minor changes. Then the committee released a 1700-word resolution, demanding withdrawal of British from India, on July 14 as follows :—

“ Events happening from day to day and experience that the people of India are passing through, confirm the opinion of Congressmen that British rule in India must end immediately not merely because foreign domination, even at its best is an evil in itself and continuing injury to the subject people, but because India in bondage can play no effective part in defending herself and in affecting the fortunes of the war that is desolating humanity. The freedom of India is thus necessary not only in the interest of India but also for the safety of the world and for the ending of the Nazism, Fascism, militarism and other forms of Imperialism, and the aggression of one nation over another.

“Ever since the outbreak of the world war, the Congress has studiously pursued, a policy of non-embarrassment. Even at the risk of making its Satyagrah ineffective, it deliberately gave it a symbolic character, in the hope that this policy of non-embarrassment carried to its logical extreme, would be duly appreciated and that real power would be transferred to popular representatives, so as to enable the nation to make its full contribution towards realisation of human freedom throughout the world, which is in danger of being crushed. It had also hoped that negatively nothing would be done which was calculated to tighten Britain's stronghold on India.

“ These hopes have, however, been dashed to pieces. The abortive Cripps' proposals showed in the clearest possible manner that there was no change in the British Government's attitude towards India and that the British hold on India was in no way to be released. In the negotiations with Sir Stafford Cripps Congress representatives tried their utmost to achieve a minimum, consistent with the national demand, but to no avail. This frustration has resulted in a rapid and widespread increase of ill-will against Britain and a growing satisfaction at the success of the Japanese arms. The working committee view this development with grave apprehension as this, unless checked, will inevitably lead to a passive acceptance of aggression. The committee hold that the aggression must be resisted, for any submission to it

must mean the degradation of the Indian people and the continuation of their subjection. The Congress is anxious to avoid the experience of Malaya, Singapore and Burma and desires to build up resistance to any aggression on or invasion of India by the Japanese or any foreign power.

"The Congress would change the present ill-will against Britain into good-will and make India a willing partner in a joint enterprise of securing freedom for the nations and people of the world and in the trials and tribulations which accompany it. This is only possible if India feels the glory of freedom.

"The Congress representatives have tried their utmost to bring about a solution of the communal tangle. But this has been made impossible by the presence of the foreign power whose long record has been to pursue relentlessly the policy of divide and rule. Only after the ending of the foreign domination and intervention, can the present unreality give place to reality, and the people of India, belonging to all groups and parties face India's problems and solve them on a mutually agreed basis. The present political parties formed chiefly with a view to attract the attention of and influence the British power, will then probably cease to function. For the first time in India's history, realisation will come home, that princes, jagirdars, zamindars and propertied and monied classes, derive their wealth and property from the workers in the fields and factories and elsewhere.



violent strength it might have gathered since 1920, when it adopted non-violence as a part of its policy for the vindication of political rights and liberty. Such a widespread struggle would inevitably be under the leadership of Gandhiji. As the issues raised are of the most vital and far-reaching importance to the people of India as well as to the people of the United Nations, the working committee refer them to the All-India Congress Committee for final decision. For the purpose the A.I.C.C. will meet in Bombay on the seventh of August, 1942."

In the same meeting the Working Committee passed another resolution also regarding evacuation and other orders of the Government. The resolution runs as follows :—

"Whereas complaints have been received from various places regarding Government orders for evacuation of villages, lands and buildings, without due notice and proper compensation, seizure and destruction of country boats, even when life is impossible without them, requisition of cycles, motor vehicles and carts without proper compensation and without regard for the needs of the civil population the working committee deem it necessary to issue the following instructions for the guidance of the people concerned and hope that the Government will take immediate and necessary steps to remove the grievances and that the people will carry out their instructions as circumstances demand, provided that in all cases before the final decision to disobey an order or resist any measure is taken, all possible avenues of

negotiation and relief through negotiation shall be thoroughly explored.

“With regard to evacuation and other order involving loss, either temporary or permanent, of landed property of any kind, full compensation should be demanded. In fixing the compensation the factors to be taken into consideration are the value of the land and the crops, inconvenience and expense likely to be caused to the holder of the land by having to move to another place, and the difficulty and delay likely to be involved in obtaining their land where the dispossessed landholder could settle.

“When possible, arrangements should be made for providing other land to agriculturists when their agricultural land is acquired. Where this is impossible compensation in money should be paid.

“Value of trees, water channels, and wells, etc., taken over or destroyed should be included in the compensation.

“In case temporary acquisition of agricultural land the full value of the crop plus 15% of it should be paid for each crop lost and where the occupation by Government terminates compensation should be paid for restoring the land to its previous conditions for agricultural purposes.

“When the bulk of the land of an agriculturist is acquired and the balance left over is so small that it may not be worth cultivating, the balance too should be acquired.

**"Homes, where acquired, should be fully paid for, where the whole or bulk of the agricultural land of an agriculturist is acquired and only his home is left over, the house should also be acquired by paying full compensation if the agriculturist so desires.**

**"Where a house is to be acquired temporarily for Government purpose fair rent should be paid and the owner compensated for the inconvenience and discomfort caused.**

**"No one should be required to vacate his house without arrangement being made elsewhere for his residence, and full compensation should be paid for the transport of the evacuee's belonging and for his maintenance for a reasonable period to enable him to find suitable occupation in his new surroundings.**

**"Compensations should in all cases be paid promptly and on the spot by a responsible officer and not at the headquarters of a district. In case no agreement is reached between the authorities and the evacuees regarding the amount of the compensation and the matter has to be referred to a tribunal for decision, the amount of compensation proposed by the authorities should be paid forthwith and should not be withheld till the adjudication of the claim.**

**"There should be no interference with the war or disposal of private property except with the consent of the owner or on payment of adequate compensation.**

**"In case of requisition of boats full compensation**

should be demanded and no boats should be surrendered till the question of compensation is settled. In areas surrounded by water when boats are indispensable for normal everyday life they should not be surrendered at all.

“Fishermen who depend upon their boats for earning their livelihood should be compensated for loss of their employment in addition to the price of the boat.

“In case of requisition of cycles, motor vehicles, carts, etc., full compensation should be demanded and until the question of compensation is settled they should not be parted with.

“In view of scarcity of salt and apprehended famine due to war conditions, facilities should be provided for collection, preparation and transport of salt seacoast and in inland areas free of duty, by individuals. People may manufacture salt for their own consumption and that of their cattle.

“With regard to restrictions on organisations for self-protection the committee is of opinion that it is the inherent right of all to protect their own life and property and those of their neighbours and therefore all restrictions on them should be disregarded.”

Soon after the meeting of the Working Committee in July Gandhiji met the various representatives of the press, Indian and foreign, and gave them a joint interview. To take up the last question first Gandhiji made it clear that the Working Committee had worked on his

own draft and there had been a lot of give and take, and accommodation. "Of course, if the resolution had not met with my approval," he added. "it could not have been passed." Among the questions put to Gandhiji the more important ones are the following :—

**Q.** Will you court imprisonment ?

**Ans.** "I am not going to court imprisonment. The struggle does not involve courting imprisonment. It is too soft a thing. We had, no doubt, made it a business to court imprisonment up to now, but there will be no such thing this time. My intention is to make the thing as short as possible.

**Q.** Quick came another question. "Will you resort to fasting if sent to jail ?

**Ans.** It is not my desire this time, as I have said, to court imprisonment. But if I am dragged into jail, it is difficult to say what I may do. But I can fast as I have fasted before now, though I should try to avoid such an extreme step as far as possible.

**Q.** Can you visualise the composition of the Provisional Government ?

**Ans.** I do not need to do so. But I am clear that it won't be a party Government. All parties including the Congress will automatically dissolve. They may function later and when they do they may function complementary to one another, each looking to the other in order to grow. Then, as I have said, all unreality disappears like mist before the morning sun. We don't

know how, though we witness the phenomenon every day.

**Q.** May not your movement hamper the efforts of the Allies in China ?

**Ans.** No, since the movement is intended to make a common cause with the Allies, it should not hamper the Allied efforts.

**Q.** But if there is no withdrawal, then disturbances are bound to happen ?

**Ans.** You see ill-will is already there, it will grow apace. Immediately the movement is started, the ill-will may be changed into good-will if the British people respond. But even if they don't respond when people make an effort to free themselves from a foreign yoke, ill-will needs no other opening. It takes a healthy turn instead of the bad turn that it has to-day.

**Q.** But only last week Mr. Amery reminded us that nothing is going to be done ?

**Ans.** I am very much afraid that we shall have the misfortune to listen to a repetition of the language in stronger terms if possible. But it cannot change the will of a group of people who are determined to go their way.

**Q.** Don't you think it would be wiser to postpone your movement until we have settled with the Germans and the Japanese ?

**Ans.** No, because I know you will not settle with the Germans without us. If we were free, we could give

you 'cent per cent co-operation in our own manner. It is curious that such a simple thing is not understood. Britain has to-day no contribution from a free India. To-morrow as soon as India is free, she gains a moral strength and a powerful ally in a free nation, powerful morally. This raises England's power to the first degree. This is surely self-proved.

The first and the main resolution of the Working Committee met with a very hostile reception at the hands of the British and the American Press, although the resolution states in very clear and unequivocal terms that the object of the demand for the withdrawal is to intensify the spirit of resistance to all aggression and to stimulate the war effort. It is sheer perversity to say that the resolution will encourage the Axis powers and have a depressing effect on China when the aim of the resolution is to beat Axis and help China. The fact is that the Imperialist Britain does not want to give up her imperialist designs at any time and America, though outwardly democratic, is invariably imperialistic and knows that she can live successfully only when her mother Britain rules the world.

The *Modern Review* in its August issue gives a cable which is an American outburst :—

New York, July 2

Major G. E. Elcott in a copyright article in a New York *Herald Tribune* explaining why Congress leaders cannot expect Americans' sympathies for their demand

says, Americans engaged in a fierce total war, must adopt a realistic attitude and abandon sentiment. "Those who are not with us in this struggle are against us. And those whose acts or attitudes, whether so intended or not, should deprive us in whole or part of the enormous military advantage desired from the possession of India, can hardly expect the Americans to regard them with anything but hostility."—*Reuter*. :

The resolution has clearly put in that should the demand for the withdrawal of the British rule be not conceded the Congress would launch on mass civil disobedience. This is necessitated by the fact that the withdrawal of the British rule is absolutely essential for the success of the Allied arms, in general, and the safety of India against the Japanese aggression, in particular, and in this case Indians are the sole judges.

To a question that the course suggested by the Congress would involve parliamentary legislation and that in war time would not be practicable or possible it may be said in reply that during the war there has been much legislation in Parliament affecting the United Kingdom. There has been much legislation in India also amending the Government of India Act of 1935 several times. On the eve of the fall of France, Mr. Churchill made a serious proposal to the people of France that if they wanted there could be joint Anglo-French citizenship, a thing unheard of in the history. Had the circumstances permitted this would have materialised. It is most unfortunate that this should stand in the way of



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says, Americans engaged in a fierce total war, must adopt a realistic attitude and abandon sentiment. "Those who are not with us in this struggle are against us. And those whose acts or attitudes, whether so intended or not, should deprive us in whole or part of the enormous military advantage desired from the possession of India, can hardly expect the Americans to regard them with anything but hostility."—*Reuter*. ;

The resolution has clearly put in that should the demand for the withdrawal of the British rule be not conceded the Congress would launch on mass civil disobedience. This is necessitated by the fact that the withdrawal of the British rule is absolutely essential for the success of the Allied arms, in general, and the safety of India against the Japanese aggression, in particular, and in this case Indians are the sole judges.

To a question that the course suggested by the Congress would involve parliamentary legislation and that in war time would not be practicable or possible it may be said in reply that during the war there has been much legislation in Parliament affecting the United Kingdom. There has been much legislation in India also amending the Government of India Act of 1935 several times. On the eve of the fall of France, Mr. Churchill made a serious proposal to the people of France that if they wanted there could be joint Anglo-French citizenship, a thing unheard of in the history. Had the circumstances permitted this would have materialised. It is most unfortunate that this should stand in the way of

**India.**

Now to a question whether the Congress was prepared to negotiate on the matter, Mahatma Gandhi said, "There is no room left for negotiation in the proposal for withdrawal. Either they recognise independence or they don't. After that recognition many things can follow. For, by that one single act the British representatives will have altered the face of the whole landscape and revived the hope of the people which has been frustrated times without number. Therefore whenever that great act is performed, on behalf of the British people it will be a red letter day in the history of India and the world. And, as I have said, it can materially affect the fortunes of the world."

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad in an interview to the Associated Press on July 20 replied to the same question.

"It refers to India's right of independence; it is certainly not a matter for negotiation. It is a fundamental principle which must be recognised by the United Nations. But if the question refers to the arrangements for the duration of the war, there is a clear procedure envisaged in the resolution of the working committee itself, and there is no reason to suggest that there is no room for negotiation. It is quite obvious to my mind that matters of the nature can only be settled by negotiation."

To another question : Suppose there is a declaration

on behalf of the United Nations guaranteeing India's independence, will it satisfy you? Maulana Sahib gave the reply, "It will depend entirely on the form and content of the declaration and, in any case, I can assure that there is no reason why the Congress should not give the fullest consideration to any declaration of the kind you have mentioned." *A.I.P*

Then Mahatma Gandhi gave a strong warning to Japan on July 18 against his intentions on India under the heading. 'To Every Japanese.' It runs as follows :--

I must confess at the outset that though I have no ill-will against you, I intensely dislike your attack upon China. From your lofty height you have descended to imperial ambition. You will fail to realise that ambition and may become the authors of the dismemberment of Asia, thus unwillingly preventing world Federation and brotherhood without which there can be no hope for humanity.

Even since I was a lad of eighteen studying in London over fifty years ago, I learnt through the writings of the late Sir Edwin Arnold to purge the many excellent qualities of your nation. I was thrilled in South Africa. I learnt of your brilliant victory over Russian arms. After my return to India from South Africa in 1915 I came in close touch with Japanese monks who lived as members of our Ashram from time to time. One of them became a regular member of the Ashram

in Sewagram, and his application to duty, his dignified bearing, his unfailing devotion to daily worship, affability, unruffledness, under varying circumstances, and his natural smile which was fortune evidence of his inner peace had endeared him to all of us. And now that owing to your declaration of war against Great Britain he has been taken away from us and we miss him as a dear co-worker. He has left behind him as a memory his daily prayer and his little drum, to the accompaniment of which we open our morning and evening prayers.

In the background of these pleasant recollections I grieve deeply as I contemplated what appears to me to be your unprovoked, your merciless devastation of that great and ancient land.

It was a worthy ambition of yours to take equal rank with the great powers of the world. Your aggression against China and your alliance with the Axis powers was surely an unwarranted excess of that ambition.

I should have thought that you would be proud of the fact that great and ancient people, whose old classical literature you have adopted as your own, are your neighbours. Your understanding of one another's history, tradition, literature should bind you as friends rather than make you the enemies you are to-day.

If I were a free man, and if you allowed me to come to your country, frail though I am, I would not mind risking my health, may be my life, to come to your

country to plead with you to desist from the wrong that you are doing to China and the world and therefore to yourself.

But I enjoy no such freedom. And we are in unique position of having to resist an imperialism that we detest no less than yours and Nazism. Our resistance to it does not mean harm to the British people. We seek to correct them. Ours is an unarmed revolt against British rule. An important party in the country is engaged in a deadly but friendly quarrel with the foreign rulers.

But in this they need no aid from foreign powers. You have been gravely misinformed, as I know you are, that we have chosen this particular moment to embarrass the Allies when your attack against India is imminent. If we wanted to turn Britain's difficulty into our opportunity we should have it as soon as the war broke out nearly three years ago.

Our movement demanding the withdrawal of the British power from India should in no way be misunderstood. In fact if we are to believe your reported anxiety for the independence of India, a recognition of that independence by Britain should leave you no excuse for any attack on India. Moreover the reported profession sorts ill with your ruthless aggression against China.

I would ask you to make no mistake about the fact that you will be sadly disillusioned if you believe that

you will receive a willing welcome from India. The end and aim of the movement for British withdrawal is to prepare India, by making her free for resisting all militarist and imperialist ambition, whether it is called British Imperialism, German Nazism or your pattern. If we do not, we shall have been ignoble spectators of the militarisation of the world in spite of our belief that in non-violence we have the only solvent of the militarist spirit and ambition. Personally I fear that without declaring the Independence of India the Allied powers will not be able to beat Axis ambition which has raised violence to the dignity of a religion. The Allies cannot beat you and your partners unless they beat you in your ruthless and skilled warfare. If they copy it their declaration that they will save the world for democracy and individual freedom must come to naught. I feel they can only gain strength to avoid copying your ruthlessness by declaring and recognising *now* the freedom of India, and turning sullen India's forced co-operation into freed India's voluntary co-operation.

To Britain and the Allies we have appealed in the name of justice, in proof of their professions, and in their own self-interest. To you I appeal in the name of humanity. It is a marvel to me that you do not see that warfare is nobody's monopoly. If not the Allies some other power will certainly improve upon your method and beat you with your own weapon. Even if you win you will have no legacy to your people of which

they would feel proud. They cannot take pride in a recital of deeds however skilfully achieved.

Even if you win it will not prove that you were in the right, it will only prove that your power of destruction was greater. This applies obviously to the Allies too, unless they perform *now* the just and righteous act of freeing India as an earnest and promise of similarly freeing all other subject people in Asia and Africa.

Our appeal to Britain is coupled with the offer of Free India's willingness to let the Allies retain their troops in India. The offer is made in order to prove that we do not in any way mean to harm the Allied cause, and in order to prevent you from being misled into feeling that you have but to step into the country that Britain has vacated. Needless to repeat that if you cherish any such idea and will carry it out, we will not fail in resisting you with all the might that our country can muster. I address this appeal to you in the hope that our movement may even influence you and your partners in the right direction and deflect you from the course which is bound to end in your moral ruin and the reduction of human beings to robots.

The hope of your response to my appeal is much fainter than that of response from Britain. I know that the Britons are not devoid of a sense of justice and they know me. I do not know you enough to be able to judge. All I have read tells me that you listen to no appeal



but to the sword. How I wish that you are cruelly misrepresented and that I shall touch the right chord in your heart. Any way I have an unending faith in the responsiveness of human nature. On the strength of that faith I have conceived the impending movement in India, and it is that faith which has prompted this appeal to you.

Sewagram :

I am,

Your Friend and Well-Wisher,  
M. K. Gandhi.

18-2-42.

On the very topic the British United Press cabled the following questions for Gandhiji's reply. They are couched in evidently angry language. But Gandhiji had no hesitation in sending straight replies to them.

**Q. 1.** Whether Gandhiji is willing to see Britain go while the Japanese are on the frontier ?

**Ans.** The question should not occur to anybody who has read my writings for they contemplate Allied arms operating in India during war.

**Q. 2.** Whether he would urge non-co-operation with the Japanese after Japanese occupation ?

**Ans.** Japanese occupation is inconceivable while Allied arms are operating on India's soil. If Japanese inflicted defeat on Allied arms and succeeded in occupying India I would more decidedly advise full non-co-operation.

**Q. 3.** Whether he would persist in urging (non-co-operation) if Japan shot non-co-operation ?

**Q. 4. Whether he would rather be shot than co-operate himself ?**

**Ans. To 3 & 4.** Non-co-operation worth the name must invite shooting. In any case I would rather be shot than submit to Japanese or any other power.

**Sewagram :—21-7-42.**

On the same topic the Congress leaders have remarked, "If we have to die we should die with honour and do not want a change of masters."—Rajindar Prasad.

"In a rousing call to the nation we almost forget everything for the moment (during Cripps' negotiations) except the peril to India and our immediate duty to defend our motherland. But we can fully only defend her shoulder to shoulder, with millions of stout arms raised in her defence, with millions, it may be of our dead offered at the altar of her freedom."—Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru.

"Only a slavish mind could imagine that Japan would give us freedom."—Maulana Azad.

Mahatma Gandhi then wrote in his *Harijan* for the doubting Muslim a passionate appeal as follows :—

If the Qaid-i-Azam really wants a settlement, I am more than him willing and so is the Congress. He will forgive me for suggesting that his reply leaves on me the impression that he does not want a settlement. If he wants one why not accept the Congress President's offer that Congress and League representatives should put their heads together and never part until they have

reached a settlement. Is there any flaw or want of sincerity in this offer ?

I have read with attention Qaid-i-Azam's reply to my article in *Harijan*. Pakistan, according to him, in a nutshell, is a demand for carrying out of India a portion to be wholly treated as an independent and sovereign state. The sovereign state can conceivably go to war against the one of which it was but yesterday a part. It can also equally conceivably make treaties with other states. All this can certainly be had, but surely not by the willing consent of the rest. But it seems he does not want it by consent, for he says, 'Pakistan is an article of faith with Muslim India and we depend upon nobody except ourselves for the achievement of our goal.' How is one to offer one's services in these circumstances ?

But later he gives me hope for he says, "Show your sincerity and frankness for an honourable settlement." In order to show both, I wrote the article to which the Qaid-i-Azam has objected. How else is one to show sincerity and frankness except through one's action and speech or pen.

Let me state my limitations. I cannot speak as mere Hindu for my Hinduism includes all religions. I can speak only as an Indian. If Pakistan as defined above is an article of faith with him invisible India is equally an article of faith with me. Hence there is a statement.

But to-day there is neither Pakistan nor Hindustan.

It is Englistan. So I say to all India, let us first convert it to the original Hindustan and then adjust all rival claims. This is surely clear. After the restoration of India to the nation there will be no Central Government. The representatives will have to construct it. It may be one Hindustan or many Pakistans :—

*A. P.*

This shows how clear and convincing Mahatma Gandhi is. This also shows his frankness and sincerity. The difference of the Muslim League with the Congress has only been on the issue of Pakistan. And the difference has been made as an excuse for Britain in not conceding to the demand of India. They (Muslim Leaguers) have thus been knowingly and unknowingly supporting Britain in its determination to keep a firm grip on India. Gandhiji served them a kind of admonition in time.

In an interview with the foreign press representative Mahatmaji made himself somewhat clear as to what is the form of the movement to be.

Some of the most important questions put on him are as follows :—

Mr. Stuart Emeny the representative of the *News Chronicle* was the first to begin with the questions.

“Could you give me an idea of the plans of your movement? Would it include breach of the salt laws, calling out Government servants and labour?”

Gandhiji made a full reply to the question. “As

I said yesterday the programme covers every activity of a strictly non-violent character included in a mass movement. Therefore undoubtedly the things you have mentioned are included. But it is not my intention to undertake at once any overwhelming programme. I want to watch and see, because whatever may be said to the contrary, even in conducting the movement I want to guard against a sudden outburst of anarchy or a state of things which may be calculated to invite Japanese aggression. I believe that India's demand is fundamental, it is indispensable for national existence as I conceive it to be. Therefore I shall take every precaution I can to handle the movement gently, but I would not hesitate to go to the entire limit, if I find that no impression is produced on the British Government or the Allied powers. I hold it to be legitimate to make the Allied powers responsible for all that may happen in India, because it is open to them in the interests of the common cause to prevent the happening of anything that might disturb the even course of the war. I think I have sufficiently answered your very pertinent question.

"I am unable to give you a more detailed answer, not because I want to suppress or shirk it, but I am not ready with a planned programme as yet."

"It will be your biggest movement?"

"Yes, my biggest movement."

"But if there is no response what time-limit would

**you set before launching your campaign ?”**

**“Assuming that A.I.C.C. confirms the resolution there will be some time but not very long taken. As far as I can see just now it may be a week or two.”**

**“But you will give time ?”**

**“Of course, as I have always done before launching on every struggle.”**

**“If the Viceroy asks you to go to Delhi, will you accept his invitation ?”**

**“Oh yes. And then you forget that the Viceroy and I have become personal friends, if a public man and a Viceroy may be so called.”**

**Knowing what the Government has always done Mr. Emeny put a plain blunt question : “Will your campaign collapse if Government sent you and thousands of your followers to jail ?”**

**“I hope not,” said Gandhiji laughing heartily. “On the contrary it should gain strength if it has any vitality.”**

**Mr. Stelle, the representative of the *Chicago Daily News* :**

**“Are you not apprehensive that the working committee’s resolution will antagonise American opinion ?”**

**Ganhiji gave the answer : “Of course it may. But I have never embarked upon any campaign in the belief that I would have world sympathy at my back. On the contrary the odds, almost in every case, have been**

against me. And the first Satyagrah struggle which started in South Africa, every outward element was hostile to me. I had then—though I had no experience of the working of Satyagrah that I have now—that a handful though we were in the midst of millions, who had no sympathy for us, we had to rely upon our own inner strength, and absolute justice of our cause. And that sustained us through the long drawn out agony lasting eight years. I do not know why I should lose the sympathy of the American people or the British people, for that matter. And why should they fight shy of a just demand for absolute freedom?"

"I can say, speaking as an American, that the reaction of many Americans would be that a movement for freedom may be unwise at the moment; for it would lead to complications in India which may be prejudicial to the efficient prosecution of the war."

This belief is born of ignorance," replied Gandhiji, "What possible internal complication can take place if the British Government declare to-day that India is absolutely independent? It would be in my opinion the best risk the Allies could take on behalf of the war effort. I am open to conviction. If any body could convince me that in the midst of war, the British Government cannot declare India free without jeopardising the war effort, I should like to hear the argument. I have not yet heard any cogent one."

"If you were convinced, would you call off the

campaign?"

"Of course, my complaint is that all these good critics talk at me, but never condescend to talk to me."

Mr. Richard Jenn, the representative of the *Central News Agency of China*, "What can free India do for Chinese?"

Gandhiji said, "If India were to listen to me, she will give non-violent help to China. But I know that will not be. Free India would want to be militarist. She will then get all the materials and men she needs—although it appears that China with her vast population will not need them. To-day unfree India cannot send a single person to China. I go further—Free India can even plead with Japan and Japan will have to listen."

After this, Mahatma Gandhi issued an appeal to the princely order of India urging them to take courage in both hands and make a common cause with the nation. It runs as follows under the heading, 'For the Princes':—

"A kind of nervousness creeps over me as I think of the princes of India, although I have the privilege of knowing many and some even intimately. My nervousness arises from the painful knowledge that they are a creation of the British rulers. Though some of them pre-existed before the British advent, their existence thereafter depended solely on British good-will, which in its turn depended upon the price their incumbents



paid for that commodity. The present incumbents are sole creation of the Imperial power. Its simple frown can undo them.

"They need not feel so helpless if they could consider themselves as an integral part of the nation instead of being, as they are, an integral part of the Imperial machine. If the machine topples they may disappear unless they become part of and depend upon the nation.

"The empire is going either by the will of the British people or by the force of circumstances beyond their control. India shall not always be a slave country. Will the Princes march with the times or must they remain tied to the Imperial chariot wheel? If they take their courage in both hands and make common cause with the nation they can run the risk of dispossession.

"This I admit is a heroic step. They can adopt the middle course. They may earn the goodwill of their people by sharing their powers with them. They will never be able to retain their absolutism for all times. But they may certainly hope to retain much if they can secure the contentment and active co-operation of their own affairs. I think it is wrong of the princes to let their critics say of their people that they are too backward to deserve freedom. It is a reflection on them. The people in the States belong to the same stock as those outside their borders. The princes can lose nothing by being liberal. And they can lose everything by hold-

ing on to their autocracy.

“For my part I desire not abolition, but conversion of their autocracy into trusteeship, not in name but in reality. The arbitrary powers they enjoy should go. The liberty of the people should not depend upon the will of an individual however noble and ancient may be his descent. Nor can any power, whether prince or any princely zamindar or merchant, be the sole owner and disposer of possessions hereditary or self-acquired. Every individual must have the fullest liberty to use his talents consistently with equal use by his neighbours but no one is entitled to the arbitrary use of the gains from the talents. He is a part of the nation or say the social structure surrounding him. Therefore he can only use his talents not for self only but for the social structure of which he is but a part and on whose sufferance he lives. The present inequities are surely due to people’s ignorance with a growing knowledge of their natural strength, the inequities must disappear. If the revolution is brought about by violence the position will be reversed, but not altered for the better. With non-violence, *i. e.*, conversion the new era which people hope for must be born. My approval and appeal are in terms of non-violence pure and undefiled. The French have a noble motto in Liberty, Equality, Fraternity. It is a heritage not for the French only but for all mankind.

“What the French never realised it is open to us to

do. Will the Princes and the princely landholders and merchants, take the lead ? It is for them to take the lead, not for havenots, who have nothing to share anybody except their pauperism and abjectness. I am addressing weekly appeals to the British power. They are made exactly in the same spirit as this is. The British may not succeed. If the 'haves', who are in fact the pillars on which the mighty British power rests, can realise their obvious duty, the British power must yield. It was because I had despaired of response from the pillars, that I have thought of moving the masses on whom the pillars rest. I may not leave a single stone unturned to avoid, if I can, what is undoubtedly a great risk. Hence this appeal."

Mahatma Gandhi left no stone unturned in clarifying the whole situation by articles, statements and answers to the questions of the representatives of Indian and foreign news agencies. He tried to convince the British Government and Britain and America and China of the necessity of fulfilling India's demand for freedom especially at the most critical juncture as the present. He appealed to Indian masses, the doubting Muslim Leaguers and Princes to join his biggest struggle for the safety and freedom of India at the time never so serious before. He warned the Axis powers against their unholy designs on India. He did what a human leader could possibly do before launching a conflict in the most non-violent and decisive way. But it is thousand pities

that there was no response from the British Government to his arguments and pleading.

Mahatma Gandhi then wrote a passionate and pathetic appeal in the *Harijan* under the heading 'An Appeal For Reason':—

"The chorus of indignation from Great Britain and America with which the Working Committee resolution on the contemplated mass action has been greeted and the veiled or open threats which it has hurled at the Congress will not alter the Congress from its purpose. Hitherto it has thriven on opposition and attempts at suppression. It will not be otherwise this time. The suppression, of which perhaps the hysterical outburst in America and Great Britain is precursor, may cow down the people for the moment, but it will never put out the light of revolt once it has been lighted.

*The Daily Herald* and the Labour party have excelled all other critics in exaggeration and abuse. How nice it would have been if they had taken the trouble to understand the Congress demand.

"The justice of the demand for the ending of British power has never been questioned, the moment chosen for enforcing it is the largest attack. It is clear as crystal in the Working Committee resolution, why this moment is chosen. Let me paraphrase it. India is not playing any effective part in the war. Some of us feel ashamed that it is so and, what is more, we feel that if we were free from the foreign yoke, we should play a

worthy, nay a decisive part in the world war which has yet to reach its climax. We know, that, if India does not become free *now*, the hidden discontent will burst forth into a welcome to the Japanese, should they effect a landing. We feel that such an event would be a calamity of the first magnitude. We can avoid it if India gains her freedom. To distrust the simple natural and honest declaration is to court disaster.

“But the critics say, ‘To whom are the British rulers to hand the keys of their withdrawal?’ It is a good question. Here is what Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, the Congress President, has said: ‘The Congress always stands, firstly for sympathy towards democratic countries, secondly it never desires to embarrass Britain and war efforts, and, thirdly it stands for opposition to the Japanese aggression. The Congress does not desire to take power for itself but for all. If real power is handed over to the Congress, surely it will approach other parties and will persuade them to join. I have no objection to Britain handing over power to the Muslim League or any other party provided it is real independence. That party will have to approach other parties as no single party can function properly without the co-operation of other parties.’

“The only thing needful is to hand over complete control without reservation, save that during the war the Allies will have power to stem Japanese or Axis attack. But they will have no power of interference with

**the affairs of India which will be as free as Great Britain herself.**

**"Surely there is nothing here to covet at for anyone. That party or a combination which takes over control of India will have to look to the remaining parties for its retention of power. There is no hope of the parties coming together so long as they have to look not to one another but to an outsider for support and sustenance. Not one of the Viceroy's numerous Indian Councillors are dependent upon any body but the Viceroy for the position they hold. How can the great or small representing parties operate without mutual support of the smallest party? For in a Free India, at least for some time to come, even the strongest party will have no military backing. There will be no military to back. There will only be raw police in the first stage unless the existing police will serve the national Government on its terms. But the support, such as it may be, that Free India will be able to render to the Allied cause, will be of sterling character. Its possibilities will be limitless and there will be no motive left for welcoming Japanese arms. On the contrary, they will then look to the Allied arms to repel any Japanese or other attack, unless all India has by then become non-violent. In any case, the Allied arms are there to-day and to-morrow and till the end of the war, whether they are needed for India's protection or not.**

**"If the presentation of the implications of the Congress demand is not appreciated by the Allies press or**

the Allies themselves, Indian public men should be forgiven if they doubt the sincerity of the fierce opposition which is being organised with ominous unanimity. The latter can only stiffen India's suspicion and resistance."

This was the last appeal of Mahatma Gandhi for reason. It is so concise, clear and cogent. It goes into the very depth of the matter. One really wonders how this appeal for reason could be resisted in the light of confessions of Britain that she is fighting for democracy and freedom and resistance to aggression. To resist it would be folly for it will create an impression that Britain wants to use India to fight her war and at the same time to keep her under bondage ever after.

Then at this time Sir Stafford Cripps gave a broadcast talk to America from London on 29th July. He quoted from Mahatma Gandhi's pronouncements torn from their contexts and concluded it thus :

"He (Mahatma Gandhi) may give a measure of support for mass disobedience, but for the sake of India as well as for the cause of United Nations, it will be our duty to insist on helping India as a safe and orderly base for our joint operations against the Japanese. Whatever steps are necessary to that end we must take fearlessly.

"Once victory is gained, India has been offered complete freedom to provide in whatever way she chooses for her own self-government. But that victory

must first be gained. We cannot allow the actions of a visionary, however distinguished in his fight for freedom in the past, to thwart the United Nations' drive for victory in the past. The issues are too grave for the whole world. American, Chinese, Indian and British soldiers must not be sacrificed in their gallant struggle for the liberty of the world by a political party man serving in India or any other country. It is the interests of India that are at stake as well as that of China, Britain and the United States.

"I am sure that we in this country can rely on you to give us your understanding, your help and your support in doing whatever is necessary to maintain intact the power of the United Nations in India and reopen the life-line of the gallant Allies, the Chinese. Certainly the action which he is now threatening—mass civil disobedience by his followers—is calculated to endanger both your war effort and our own and bring the greatest aid and comfort to our common enemies."

This shows how India's demand is being misinterpreted and misunderstood and how Americans are left from correct information. The life-line of the great ally, China, is to be reopened not by listening to the great appeal of the Chinese General but by acting against it. It is not clear why when other nations like the Chinese, the Russians, the Americans and the British are fighting all the better because of their possession of freedom, in the case of India alone



independence is expected to destroy or decrease her fighting capacity and thwart the drive for victory over her invaders. The last sentence of the broadcast will compare curiously with Gandhi's warning to every Japanese.

On August 7, Gandhiji gave the following message for the people of China :—

“Let China know that this struggle is as much for her defence as it is for India's liberation, for in that liberation is involved her ability to give effective assistance whether to China or to Russia, or even to Great Britain or America.”

Then came the momentous session of A. I. C. C. in Bombay. To all intents and purposes, everybody thought that this would inaugurate the struggle between the Government and the country for which Gandhiji had so assiduously prepared the atmosphere. When Gandhiji came to Bombay he was given a rousing reception.

On his way to Bombay, Gandhiji wrote “To American Friends” as follows :—

“Dear Friends,

“I invite you to read my formula of withdrawal or as it has been popularly called “Quit India” with this background (not given here). You may not read into it more than the content warrants.

“I claim to be a votary of truth, from my childhood.

It was the most natural thing to me. My prayerful search gave me the revealing maxim 'Truth is God' instead of the usual one "God is truth". That maxim enables me to see God face to face as it were. I feel Him pervade every fibre of my being. With this truth as witness between you and me I assert that I would not have asked my country to invite Great Britain to withdraw her rule over India, irrespective of any demand to the contrary. If I had not seen at once that for the sake of Great Britain and the Allied cause it was necessary for Britain boldly to perform the duty of freeing India from bondage. Without the essential act of tardy justice, Britain could not justify her position before the unmurdering world conscience which is there nevertheless. Singapore, Malaya and Burma taught me that the disaster might not be repeated in India. I make bold to say that it cannot be averted unless Britain trusts the people of India to use their liberty in favour of the Allied cause. By that supreme act of justice, Britain would have taken away all cause for the scething discontent of India. She will turn the growing ill-will into active goodwill. I submit that it is worth all the battleships and airships that your wonder working engineers and financial resources can produce.

"I know that interested propaganda has filled your ears and eyes with distorted visions of the Congress position. I have been pointed as hypocrite and enemy of Britain under disguise. My demonstrable spirit of accommodation has been described as my inconsistency

proving me to be an utterly unreliable man. I am not going to burden this letter with proof in support of my assertions. If the credit I have enjoyed in America will not stand me in good stead, nothing I may argue in self-defence will carry conviction against the formidable but false propaganda that has poisoned American ears.

“You have made common cause with Great Britain. You cannot therefore disown responsibility for anything that her representatives do in India. You will do a grievous wrong to the Allied cause if you do not sift the truth from the chaff whilst there is yet time. Just think of it. Is there anything wrong in the Congress demanding the conditional recognition of India's independence ?

“We say, this is the psychological moment for that recognition. For then and then only can there be irresistible opposition to Japanese aggression. It is of immense value to the Allied cause if it is also of equal value to India. The Congress has anticipated and provided for every possible difficulty in the way of recognition of India's independence as a war measure of first class magnitude.”

The meeting of the Working Committee was held on August 4. Gandhiji attended it. On August 5, the Working Committee released the draft resolution to be placed before the All India Congress Committee on August 7. The full text of the resolution is as

below :—

***Congress Working Committee Resolution.***

“The All-India Congress Committee has given the most careful consideration to the reference made to it by the Working Committee in their resolution dated July 14, 1942, and to subsequent events, including the development of the war situation, the utterances of responsible spokesmen of the British Government and the comments and criticisms made in India and abroad. The Committee approves of and endorses that resolution and is of opinion that events subsequent to it have given it further justification, and have made it clear that the immediate ending of British rule in India is an urgent necessity, both for the sake of India and for the success of the cause of the United Nations. The continuation of that rule is degrading and enfeebling India and making her progressively less capable of defending herself and of contributing to the cause of world freedom.

“The Committee has viewed with dismay the deterioration of the situation on the Russian and Chinese front and conveys to the Russian and Chinese peoples its high appreciation of their heroism in defence of their freedom. This increasing peril makes it incumbent on all those who strive for freedom and who sympathise with the victims of aggression, to examine the foundations of the policy so far pursued by the Allied nations, which have led to repeated and disastrous failure. It is not by adhering to such aims and policies

and methods that failure can be converted into success. For past experience has shown that failure is inherent in them. These policies have been based not on freedom so much as on the domination of subject and colonial countries and the continuation of the Imperialist tradition and method. The possession of empire, instead of adding to the strength of the ruling Power, has become a burden and a curse. India, the classic land of modern Imperialism, has become the crux of the question. For by the freedom of India will Britain and the United Nations be judged, and the peoples of Asia and Africa be filled with hope and enthusiasm.

“The ending of British rule in this country is thus a vital and immediate issue on which depend the future of the war and the success of freedom and democracy. A free India will assure this success by throwing all her great resources in the struggle for freedom and against the aggression of Nazism, Fascism and Imperialism. This will not only affect materially the fortunes of the war, but will bring all subject and oppressed humanity on the side of the United Nations, and these nations whose ally India would be, the moral and spiritual leadership of the world. India in bondage will continue to be the symbol of British Imperialism and the trait of that Imperialism will affect the fortunes of all the United Nations.

“The peril of to-day, therefore, necessitates the independence of India and the ending of British domination.

**No future promises or guarantees can effect the present situation or meet that peril. They cannot produce the needed psychological effect on the mind of the masses. Only the glow of freedom now can release that energy and enthusiasm of millions of people which will immediately transform the nature of the war.**

**“The A. I. C. C., therefore, repeats with all emphasis the demand for the withdrawal of the British power from India. On the declaration of India’s independence, provisional government will be formed and free India will become an ally of the United Nations, sharing with them in the trials and tribulations of the joint enterprise of the struggle for freedom. The provisional government can only be formed by the co-operation of the principal parties and groups in the country. It will thus be a composite government representative of all important sections of the people of India. Its primary functions must be to defend India and resist aggression which all the armed as well as the non-violent forces at its command, together with its Allied powers, and to promote the well-being and progress of the workers in the fields and factories and elsewhere, to whom essentially all power and authority must belong.**

**“The provisional government will evolve a scheme for a Constituent Assembly which will prepare a constitution for the Government of India acceptable to all sections of the people. This constitution, according to the Congress view, should be a federal one, with the**

largest measure of autonomy for the federating units. and with the residuary powers vesting in these units. The future relations between India and the Allied Nations will be adjusted by representatives of all these free countries conferring together for their mutual advantage and for their co-operation in the common task of resisting aggression. Freedom will enable India to resist aggression effectively with the people's united will and strength behind it.

“The freedom of India must be the symbol of and prelude to this freedom of all other Asiatic nations under foreign domination. Burma, Malaya, Indo-China, the Dutch Indies, Iran and Iraq must also attain their complete freedom. It must be clearly understood that such of these countries as are under Japanese control now must not subsequently be placed under the rule or control of any other colonial power. While the A. I. C. C. must primarily be concerned with the independence and defence of India in this hour of danger, the Committee is of opinion that the future peace, security and ordered progress of the world demand a world federation of free nations, and on no other basis can the problems of the modern world be solved. Such a world federation would ensure the freedom of its constituent nations, the prevention of aggression and exploitation by one nation over another, the protection of national minorities, the advancement of all backward areas and peoples, and the pooling of the world's resources for the common good

of all. On the establishment of such a world federation, disarmament would be practicable in all countries: National armies, navies and air forces would no longer be necessary, and a world federal defence force would keep the world peace and prevent aggression.

“An independent India would gladly join such a world federation and co-operate on an equal basis with other countries in the solution of international problems.

“Such a federation should be open to all nations who agree with its fundamental principles. In view of the war, however, the federation must inevitably, to begin with, be confined to the United Nations. Such a step taken now will have a most powerful effect on the war, on the peoples of the Axis countries, and on the peace to come.

“The Committee regretfully realises, however, that despite the tragic and overwhelming lessons of the war and the perils that overhang the world, the Governments of few countries are yet prepared to take this inevitable step toward world federation. The reactions of the British Government and the misguided criticism of the foreign press also make it clear that even the obvious demand for India's independence is resisted though this has been made essentially to meet the present peril and to enable India to defend herself and help China and Russia in their hour of need. The Committee is anxious not to embarrass in any way the defence of



China or Russia, whose freedom is precious and must be preserved, or to jeopardise the defensive capacity of the United Nations. But the peril grows to India and these nations and in-action and submission to a foreign administration at this stage is not only degrading India and reducing her capacity to defend herself and resist aggression, but is no answer to that growing peril and is no service to the peoples of the United Nations. The earnest appeal of the Working Committee to Great Britain and the criticisms made in many foreign quarters have shown an ignorance of India's and the world's need, and sometimes even hostility to India's freedom, which is significant of a mentality of domination and racial superiority which cannot be tolerated by a proud people conscious of their strength and of the justice of their cause.

“The A. I. C. C. would yet again, at this last moment, in the interest of world freedom, renew this appeal to Britain and the United Nations. But the Committee feels that it is no longer justified in holding the nation back from endeavouring to assert its will against an imperialist and authoritarian government which dominates over it and prevents it from functioning in its own interest and in the interest of humanity. The Committee resolves, therefore, to sanction, for the vindication of India's inalienable right to freedom and independence, the starting of a mass struggle on non-violent lines on the widest possible scale, so that the country might

utilise all the non-violent strength it has gathered during the last 22 years of peaceful struggle. Such a struggle must inevitably be under the leadership of Gandhiji and the Committee requests him to take the lead and guide the nation in the steps to be taken.

“The Committee appeals to the people of India to face the dangers and hardships that will fall to their lot with courage and endurance, and to hold together under the leadership of Gandhiji, and carry out his instructions as disciplined soldiers of Indian freedom. They must remember that non-violence is the basis of this movement. A time may come when it may not be possible to issue instruction or instructions to reach our people, and when no Congress Committees can function. When this happens, every man and woman, who is participating in this movement must function for himself within the four corners of the general instructions issued. Every Indian who desires freedom and strives for it must be his own guide, urging him on along the hard road where there is no resting place and which leads ultimately to the independence and deliverance of India.

“Lastly, whilst the A. I. C. C. has stated its  
of the future government under free India, it  
wishes to make it quite clear to  
embarking on mass struggle it has  
ing power for the Congress. The  
will belong to the whole of India.”

The resolution sanctions the starting of a mass struggle on non-violent lines, on the widest possible scale, under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi and requests him to take the lead and guide the nation in the steps to be taken. It conveys to Russia and her people, high appreciation of their heroism in defence of their freedom and expresses anxiety not to embarrass them in any way or jeopardise the defensive capacity of the United Nations.

The resolution also refers to the widespread criticisms made in many foreign quarters to the Wardha resolution which, it says, shows ignorance of India's and world's need.

The Committee further emphasises that by embarking on mass struggle it has no intention of gaining power for the Congress. The power, when it comes, will belong to the whole people of India.

#### *Meeting of A. I. C. C.*

Opening the A.I.C.C. proceedings on the 7th, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad remarked :—

“The menace of aggression to India was ever increasing and the danger which was only a distant one a few months ago, was fast approaching them. In the face of such danger, it would be a calamity to allow the people to become sullen and down-hearted. The Congress wanted to see that every Indian youth took part in resisting aggression. If the people of India were indifferent and sullen, the responsibility was not that of the Congress but that of the British Government.

**"The 'Quit India' demand does not mean the physical removal of all the Britishers from India but it means the transfer of power."**

After the Maulana, Gandhiji addressed the meeting. He maintained that Congress represents the whole country. He said :—

**"Another point I want to impress upon you is your great responsibility. Members of the A.I.C. C. are like members of a parliament. The Congress represents the whole of India. The Congress from its very inception has not been of any particular groove or any particular province. It has claimed, ever since its birth, to represent the whole nation and on your behalf I have made the claim that you represent not only the registered members of the Congress but the entire nation.**

**"This is a crucial hour. If we keep quiet and don't play our part, it would not be right on our part. If it is only Britain and the United States who fight this war, and if our part is only to give monetary help, whether given willingly or taken from us unwillingly, it is not a very happy proposition. But we can show our real grit and valour only when it becomes our own fight. Then even a child will be brave. We shall get our freedom by fighting. It cannot fall from the skies. I know fully well the Britishers will have to give us freedom when we have made sufficient sacrifices and proved our strength. We must remove hatred for the British from our hearts. At least in my heart there is no such hat-**

red. As a matter of fact, I am a greater friend of the British now than ever was. The reason for this is that at this moment they are in distress. My friendship demands that I must make them aware of their mistakes as I am not in the position in which they are, on the brink of a ditch, and are about to fall into it. Therefore, even if they want to cut off my hands, my friendship demands that I should try to pull them out of that ditch.

“It may be that in a moment of anger they might do things which might provoke you. Nevertheless, you should not resort to violence and put non-violence to shame. When such a thing happens you may take it that you will not find me alive, wherever I may be. Their blood will be on your head. If you don’t understand this, it would be better if you rejected this resolution.

“The resolution that is placed before you says that we don’t want to remain frogs in a well. We are aiming at world federation. It can come only through non-violence. Disarmament is only possible if you use the matchless weapon of non-violence. There are people who may call me a visionary but I tell you I am a real *bania* and my business is to obtain Swaraj. If you don’t accept this resolution, I won’t be sorry for it. On the contrary, I would dance with joy because you would then relieve me of the tremendous responsibility which you are now going to place on me. I want you to accept

it *in toto* and stick to it when you join the struggle.”

Following Mahatma Gandhi, Pandit Jawahar Lal moved the resolution and observed :—

“The resolution was in no sense a challenge to any one. If the British Government accepted the proposal, it would change the position for the better, both internal and international, from every point of view. The position of China would be improved. Whatever change might come about in India, it must be for the better. The A.I.C.C knew that Mahatma Gandhi had agreed that British and other foreign armed forces stationed in India might continue. This was in order not to allow the Japanese to come in.”

Sardar Patel seconding the resolution declared that for three years Congress was scrupulously adhering to their policy of non-embarrassment, but this attitude was not appreciated by the British. Congress could wait no longer.

If America and England were still thinking that they could fight their enemies from India without the co-operation of 40 millions of people, they were foolish. It must dawn on the people that this war was a people's war and they should fight for their country and their freedom. As long as this feeling was non-existent, no amount of propaganda through the newspapers and the radio could rouse the people to a supreme effort.

They all tell us that there are so many puppet governments set up by Hitler all over the conquered coun-

**tries. What kind of Government other than a puppet Government is ruling us now?**

**The fight before you is going to be a tough one.**

**When the Committee reassembled on the 8th a number of amendments to the Working Committee resolution were moved. The President ruled out of order Mr. Balakrishna Sarma's amendment which sought a postponement of the present struggle. Mr. Saxena, Dr. Subharoyan and a few communists brought in other amendments.**

**After all the amendments had been moved, the committee proceeded to a general discussion on the resolution.**

**Pandit Jawahar Lal then replied to the debate and said :—**

**"This resolution is not a threat. It is an invitation. It is an explanation ; it is an offer of co-operation. It is all that. But still behind it there is a clear indication that certain consequences will follow if certain events do not happen. It is an offer of co-operation of a free India. On any other terms, there will be no co-operation. On any other terms, our resolution promises only conflict and struggle."**

**The Congress President then put the various amendments to vote. Three amendments were withdrawn and the remaining were rejected by overwhelming majority, only 12 members voting in their favour. The original resolution was then put to vote and was carried, only 12 members**

voting against it. The Congress President then declared the resolution passed amidst loud and continued cheers.

Mahatma Gandhi then addressed the House for 120 minutes in English and Hindustani :—

“ I take up my task of leading you in this struggle not as your commander, not as your controller, but as the humble servant of you all ; and he who serves best becomes the chief among them. I am the chief servant of the nation, that is how I look at it.”

He also added, “I want to share all the shocks that you have to face.”

Mahatma Gandhi then called on all Indians to begin to feel that they are free men.

He asked Indian princes to act as trustees of their people and not be autocrats. The time for them to change had come. He asked them to act wisely, while he was alive. When he was gone, Pandit Nehru would have no patience with them.

Mahatma Gandhi called on Indian newspapers to stop publication of their news. He added that when India's independence was achieved, newspapers could resume.

Referring to Government servants, Mahatma Gandhi said there was no need for them immediately to resign, but they should write to Government to say that they are with the Congress.



**Mahatma Gandhi asked teachers and students to be ready to get out.**

**Mahatma Gandhi also declared :—**

**“We shall make every effort to see the Viceroy before starting the struggle.**

**“Our struggle is now to start. But before launching the movement, I will address a letter to the Viceroy and wait for his reply. It may take a week or fortnight or three weeks.**

**“I have pledged the Congress and the Congress will do or die.”**

**Before the conclusion of the session, Maulana Sahib announced that he was sending copies of the resolution to President Roosevelt, to China and to the Russian ambassador in London. If all their efforts failed, then it was for Indians to take a determined step forward with the determination that in their struggle they would venture ahead, no matter what happened to them, whether they sink or swim, whether they win or lose.**

**The session then concluded at 10 p. m.**

**Mahatma Gandhi when asked if the movement would not hamper war efforts of the United Nations said, “The movement is intended not only to help China, but also to make common cause with the Allies.” On the same point Maulana Sahib said, “The Congress position was that India’s defence could only be**

with the aid of armed forces. As for himself he would not hesitate to introduce conscription in India, but the presence of the British in the country had made things impossible."

## CHAPTER VI

### **Disturbances in the Country and Appeal to Britain**

The claim of India for freedom to be able to resist any foreign aggression is so strong and just, that one can hardly find words to emphasize. The Congress wanted to make the war as a people's war as it actually is for China, Japan, Russia, Germany, Italy, Britain and America, by raising an army, million strong, if possible by conscription, that would fight shoulder to shoulder with the armies of the Allied nations, till the victorious conclusion of the war. Otherwise the whole army consists of mercenary soldiers that will not risk their lives. The leaders of the Congress made that abundantly clear by all possible means such as articles, statements, appeals, answers to questions and resolutions. They warned the British Government that if they did not meet the just and urgent demands of the country, the Congress would launch, as a last resort, mass civil disobedience. But for that too they would further explore all avenues so that the conflict at that critical time might be avoided.

But to no purpose. As soon as the Government learned that the A.I.C.C. had passed the resolution purporting to launch mass civil disobedience under the leader-

ship of Mahatma Gandhi, in case the British Government did not listen, on that very night they passed a resolution against the resolution of the A. I. C. C. The main points of the resolution are given below.

“The Government of India would regard it as wholly incompatible with their responsibilities to the people of India and their obligations to the Allies, that a demand should be discussed, the acceptance of which would plunge India into confusion and anarchy internally and would paralyse her effort in the common cause of human freedom.....

“Internally the withdrawal of British Rule invites civil war, the collapse of law and order, the outbreak of communal feud, the dislocation of economic life with its inevitable hardship nor can the Government of India accept the claim of the Congress party to speak for India as a whole. That claim has no foundation and the acceptance of the proposals now put forward by the Congress party must mean the abandonment of all these large and powerful elements in the population which have condemned the course of action proposed by the Congress Party and which resent and resist the widespread dislocation which its acceptance would involve of India's war effort and of the general life of the community. There is no justification for these claims. Nor can the Government of India accept the suggestion that a stable Provisional Government would be formed in a moment of time within a day or two

of the withdrawal of the British power. The acceptance of the demand now put forward by the Congress Party must mean the betrayal, in particular of Russia and China, the betrayal of all those ideals to which so much support has been given and is being given to-day from the true heart and mind of India.

“There is nothing that the Government of India regret more than this challenge at so critical a juncture. But on them there is the task of defending India by maintaining India’s capacity to wage war, of safeguarding India’s interest of holding the balance between the different sections of her people without fear or favour.”

The Congress had only passed a resolution of starting civil disobedience on a mass scale in case all hopes from all sides had been dashed. It did not actually start civil disobedience although it had shown an intention of doing so. At the same time, neither the date of starting the civil disobedience had been fixed, nor the manner in which it would start had been prescribed. The guilt of the Congress so far consisted in its intention. Of course it had well prepared the atmosphere. Had negotiations been allowed to explore all avenues of settlement, it is possible, all unfortunate events that subsequently happened could be averted. Hence it is not the Congress but the Government that is responsible for the unfortunate events. The Government fired the first shot.

The A. I. C. C. session concluded at 10 p. m. on August 8. On that very night the Government issued its resolution, that has been described above. By 5 a. m. Mahatma Gandhi, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, all members of the Working Committee and a large number of members of A.-I. C. C. were arrested in Bombay.

*Harijan* dated August 18, describes Mahatma Gandhi's arrest. Gandhiji woke up as usual at 4 a. m. for the morning prayers, to-day, Sunday the 9th instant. He was about to proceed with his daily routine after the prayer when the news came that the Police Commissioner was at the gate and wanted to see Mahadev Desai, Gandhiji's Secretary. He brought with him warrants of arrest and detention under the Defence of India Rules for Gandhiji, Mr. Mahadev Desai and Mira Ben. There were no similar orders for Mrs. Gandhi and Payarelal, Gandhiji's other Secretary, but the Police Commissioner said, he had instructions to take them with Gandhiji under the same term if they chose to accompany him. But they decided not to. In reply to Gandhiji's enquiry, the Police Commissioner informed Mr. Mahadev Desai that they had half an hour in which to get ready. Gandhiji had his breakfast of goat milk and fruit juice as usual. His favourite hymn *Vaishnav Jan* was then sung by his party and the members of the Birla family, his hosts. Verses from Quran were recited by a Muslim member of his Sewagram Ashram.

He then left with a few personal belongings including his copy of Gita, Ashram hymn book, a copy of Quran and Urdu Primer and his Dhanesh Takli for spinning. Before he entered the car, he was garlanded and the auspicious *kum-kum* mark was put on his forehead by Mrs. R. D. Birla, the hostess. Messrs. R. D. Birla, G. D. Birla and other members of the family then bade farewell and he left with his usual smile accompanied by Mira Ben and the Police Commissioner in the first car, while Mr. Mahadev Desai followed him in the second car in charge of a Superintendent of Police.

The news of the arrest of Gandhiji, Pandit Jawaharlal, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and a host of the Congress leaders spread in the city of Bombay with the speed of electricity and soon the entire city was engulfed in commotion and agitation. The resentment of the people against the Government in firing the first shot went out of bounds and they began to burn the Government buildings, police stations, and other Government offices. They cut down the trees to scatter them on the roads to prevent all Government help from reaching those places. The Government at once used a large number of Police force and British and Indian troops that had been gathered there in anticipation to combat the mob fury. There resulted conflicts between the mob and the armed forces and some casualties took place.

The news of the arrests and conflagration at Bombay

soon spread to Poona and Ahmadabad, where also similar incidents happened.

In one or two days, the conflagration spread to Delhi, Lucknow, Cawnpore, Patna, Calcutta, Madras, Nagpur and Allahabad and at several places the police opened fire and used machine guns. The position in Behar, Central Provinces and United Provinces became extremely serious. In these areas, the trouble soon spread from the towns to the outlying areas. At several places the mob attacked the police and the armed forces even and there were large casualties. The bazars were closed and the hartals were organised and the students, boys and girls of schools and colleges, left their studies and took an active part in all these disturbances. At many places railway lines were uprooted, railway stations were burnt and telegraph and telephone lines were cut. Strikes took place in mill areas and the labour also participated in these disturbances; almost the whole mill area of Ahmedabad struck work for about four months and a large number of mills of Bombay and Cawnpore even struck work for some time.

All this was the spontaneous reaction of the public against the arrests of their popular leaders who had sacrificed their all in the struggle for the freedom of the teeming millions of their brethren from the foreign yoke.

Mr. Churchill in the house of Commons declared



that less than 500 people were killed. Later, on May 28, 1948, Mr. Amery declared that the total number of people imprisoned up to March 15th was 34885, while 1162 had been subjected to detainment. Up to Dec. 10, according to Mr. Amery's statement total collective fines were levied in 1556 cases and over Rs. 78 lakhs had been realised. In one incident a Magistrate of His Majesty's Government observed in a Judicial case as follows: "Dibrugarh June 18, Delivering judgment in the Dhekajjuli firing case, the Special Magistrate, Mr. S. K. Dass, thus observed about the constables who opened fire and the nature of the firing.

"They fired and fired at the fleeing crowd and anybody and every body and probably some one else chased the fleeing people by the road to some distance. A dead body was found in Hatkhola to the south of the thana building; one was found to the south of the thana culvert, another that of a young girl near the culvert over the P W D road in front of Satish Biswas shop. A dead body was found later on near the Godhajali river at a distance of more than a mile from the police station, the man found dead at the Hatkhola was a beggar. These facts go to prove that firing resorted to by the constables was indiscriminate, uncontrolled and cowardly."

*(Tribune, June 15, 1943.)*

At the time of occurrences, i.e., September 20, people pressed the Premier for enquiry but were refused.

*(Tribune June 15, 1943)*

The Government by a New Defence of India Rule forbade the closing of shops and restaurants. By another addition to the Rules, the Provincial Governments were empowered to supersede the local authority in enforcing law and order and for the maintenance of supply and services essential to the life of the community. Another order of the Central Government prohibited the printing or publishing by any printer, publisher or editor, of any factual news (which expression shall include reports of speeches or statements by members of the public) relating to the mass movement sanctioned by the All-India Congress Committee or to the measures taken by Government against that movement, except news derived from official sources, or the Associated Press of India, the United Press of India, or a correspondent regularly employed by the newspaper concerned and whose name stands registered with the District Magistrate of the district in which he carried on his work. The source of the information shall also be stated in the newspaper publishing such news. The Government also threatened to bring to book any one who would assist the operations of the Congress Committees that were declared unlawful in several places. It also threatened to proceed against an editor who would support or encourage the mass movement, without any warning or consultation with the Advisory Committees. These severe restrictions on the publications of news led to the suspension of many papers in English and Vernacular throughout the country. Fourteen papers

in Bengal and seven in Madras stopped their publications from the 20th. The *Hindustan Times* of Delhi and the *National Herald* of Lucknow followed suit. More than thirty newspapers ceased their publication from the 21st.

In Chimur a village in C. P. the womenfolk were molested by the police and military. People exerted pressure for enquiry. The residents of the place also insisted for an enquiry but it was not held till Prof. Bhansil undertook a fast unto death when the Government did something to appease the people and assured them that in future the Government would attach great importance to the maintenance of discipline among the military and the police and would consider the respect and honour of women and their protection from molestation as their essential duty.

There have also been instances of official high-handedness in suppressing these disturbances in Bengal. According to the statement of Dr. Shyam Parshad Mukerji, given somewhere ahead in this book, and also the statement of Mr. Fazalul Haq, the Government officers committed excesses in Midnapur, in Dacca Jail shooting case and at Sanoa, in the district of Noakhali, where women were outraged. In case of Sanoa a Deputy Collector who happened to be the Additional Sub-divisional Officer was at once transferred for the crime of sending a telegram to the District Magistrate asking for instruc-

tions how to proceed on the plea that the telegram might be a very important piece of evidence against the guilty persons. In connection with these incidents, the Bengal Legislative Assembly, excepting the European members, demanded the appointment of an enquiry committee into these alleged official excesses. According to Mr. Fazal-ul Haq himself, "The allegations made were of so serious a character and yet so specific that it was felt that it would be in the interest of the officials themselves to put the accused in proof of their accusations. I agreed. This amounted to a promise to hold an enquiry into the allegations."

These revelations will now convince the public that in the Midnapore, Dacca jail affairs and Sonoa, the authorities in charge had not acted with clean hands and that the Governor in his eagerness to shield them frustrated the attempt at enquiries even.

To take up the narrative. Mr. Amery on the 9th of August gave the following broadcast message on India :—

"The negotiations broke owing to the intransigent (all or nothing) attitude of Congress leaders who demanded that the Government of India should be handed over to a group of Indian politicians responsible to nobody. This would have been a negation of democracy and would have been acceptable to neither the 95 million Muslims of India, nor to many other elements in India's nation-

al life. The rejection of the British proposal profoundly disappointed public opinion in India and has seriously shaken credit of Congress leadership. In this situation Mr. Gandhi has determined upon a kind of open clash with the Government, which is calculated to arouse mass emotion, and so regain prestige for himself and his associates and focus attention upon themselves as the champions of India against so-called British opposition. This is the sum and substance of the real meaning of this latest move."

Again on the 10th he broadcast and said :

"What India is up against is nothing less than a deliberate campaign to sabotage her effort and the war effort of all Indians, British, Americans or Chinese who are in Indian soil and with the whole-hearted support of the Government of India and of the loyal and responsible elements who form the vast majority of the people of India to-day engaged in the present struggle for human freedom."

One who has read all that has been said before in connection with Sir Stafford Cripps' proposal and how the Indian leaders had to reject it and what the resolution of the All-India Congress Committee explicitly said and what the leaders of the Congress were at pains to convey, will at once say that what Mr. Amery says in these broadcasts is all falsehood and misrepresentation.

On the arrest of the Congress leaders the Chinese

papers commented as below :—

*Chungking Aug. 12.*

“Breaking their silence for the first time, Chinese newspapers to-day (Tuesday) all carried head-lined articles on the Indian political situation, unanimously deploing the aggravation of the tension. The Official Central Daily News said, We receive news of the arrest of Mr. Gandhi and Pandit Nehru and Maulana Abul-kalam Azad with regret.”

“The news of Mr. Gandhi’s arrest and of the disturbances and bloodshed in India have been received here with gréat sorrow” says an editorial in the influential independent newspaper *Takungpao*. It continues, “Both Britain and India are our friends and so we appealed for a compromise and have never expressed an opinion as to who is right or wrong. The spirit behind the present war is resistance against aggression in the struggle for freedom without which the present war is meaningless. *India’s struggle for freedom is identical with the war aims of the United Nations and we have no reason not to be sympathetic.*”

The American armed forces stationed in India were asked at this time not to take part in internal troubles in India by the following message :

*Washington Aug. 18.*

The State Department said to night that the American armed forces in India are there solely to prosecute

the war against the Axis and have been warned to avoid taking any part in internal trouble.

The presence of American forces in India is primarily to aid China, the Department said. In the event of disturbance where they are stationed, they are authorised to resort to defensive measures only, should their own personal safety or that of the American citizens be endangered.

The department added that the policy of the United States Government in this emergency had already been made part of the orders issued to the American forces which had been in India for some time.

The American forces are not to indulge in the slightest degree the activities of any other nation unless India should be attacked by Axis powers in which event the American forces would aid in defending India.

At this time from the detention camps came the news that Mahadev Desai, Mahatma Gandhi's Private Secretary died of heart failure. The government of Bombay issued a *Communique* on the occasion that all available help was rushed to save him but the life in him was extinct within 20 minutes from the time when he first complained of feeling unwell. Mahadev Desai was fifty-two at the time of his death. He was to Gandhiji 'as a spare body that worked for him whenever his own took a little rest.' Gandhiji himself said about Mahadev that he was both a father and son to him.

There was confusion all around and no solution of

the problem was visible when Lord Stabolgi from London made a suggestion on September 12, that Britain should swallow its pride and invite the President of the United States to arbitrate in the matter. "In view of the tremendous issues involved it would be better to recognise now that an outside and impartial mediator was needed. Fighting in India was essential for the defeat of the Japanese but he feared a repetition of what happened in Burma where important elements turned to Japan after being rebuffed in London."

The *Manchester Guardian* wrote on the Indian deadlock as follows :—

"What Indians are almost all asking for now is an Indian Government at the Centre which would be broadly representative and would support the war. Have we anything against that if it can be accomplished ? asks the *Manchester Guardian* in a leader to-day (Friday.)

"Indian leaders who have been talking to each other proceed on the principle that the Indians should help themselves and should deal with one another. Some of these want to negotiate with the arrested Congress leaders. If as is said, the Viceroy has refused his consent he is unwise.

"Even if he himself refuses, why should not other Indians be allowed to discover chances of Government and take risks of failure to themselves ? If unexpectedly some progress to a settlement were made it would be of immense relief to the whole Allied cause. If there were



still deadlocks, Indians would have done what they could with Indians and they could go on considering as they are already considering whether they should not try to bring about a National Government without the Congress in it"—

The "New Statesman and Nation" wrote on the Indian situation as below :—

*London Sept. 18.*

"With the tropical rains coming to an end the Japanese may declare to launch an attack upon India," says "New Statesman and Nation."

"At such a time the formation of an Indian Government to collaborate fully in the defence of their own country would seem to be first object of policy. When Sir Stafford went to India and even when he left, most people in India as well as in Britain believed in the sincerity of Britain's intentions. Now after Mr. Churchill's speech, Indian Nationalists of all kinds will talk of British *bona fides*. Only a prompt change of policy would remove his impression.

"No one who has followed the discussion in India during the last few days can fail to be impressed by the virtual unanimity amongst most of the various Indian groups and individuals, Muslims, Hindus and Christians that National Government is now necessary and possible in India provided that Indian independence is conceded. We believed that if there were no doubt about effective authority to be handed over to National Government

in which not all but most of the leading and most of the representative Hindus and Muslims could co-operate. But it would have to be a government and not a Viceroy's Council."

On the 10th of September the Indian leaders in a joint statement made a demand that the British Prime Minister should settle the Indian problem. The appeal asked for a declaration, immediate transfer of real power to Indian hands, postponing all controversial issues. This appeal was made on the eve of Mr. Churchill's then expected statement on India. Copies of the appeal were cabled to Mr. Churchill and forwarded to the Viceroy.

"The present war, which has involved all the nations of the world is proclaimed to be a struggle between democracy and freedom on one side and tyranny and non-superiority on the other. From the beginning of this titanic struggle India has been demanding that Great Britain should implement the professions of equality and freedom so that her moral prestige might rise and her cause be endowed with justice. For some reasons or other she has been evading this obvious duty and postponing the accomplishment of the great ideals for which she professes to fight.

"The failure of her policy in Egypt and Ireland, in Burma and Malaya indicates that if she is to be successful in India, she must enlist the popular will and enthusiasm. The Indian people must be made to feel that they are

defending their honour and freedom, their hearths and homes against the foreign aggression. The examples of China and Russia are there to indicate that only a people's war can be waged successfully under modern conditions. The most influential political party in a mood of utter despair finding no adequate response to this legitimate demand wished to change their policy of non-embarrassment to achieve freedom. But before they could promulgate the same they were incarcerated and a policy of repression ensued. We feel that an atmosphere of violence and counter violence is hardly the atmosphere for satisfactory reconciliation between India and Great Britain. If Great Britain is willing to grant self-government to India after war, what is it that prevents its accomplishment to-day? A national Government pledged to the support of the war against the aggressors, consisting of representatives of major political interests, with complete autonomy in the internal administration during the period of the war and unfettered freedom thereafter will satisfy the demand for independence put forth by all the political parties in the country.

“Such a declaration of immediate transfer of the real power to Indian hands postponing all controversial issues until after the war will produce the right atmosphere for dissolving differences and harmonising divergent tendencies which are now emphasised. By solving the Indian problem Britain will help the Allied nations, improve her own case and be a powerful instrument for

the overthrow of the aggressive powers which are menacing civilization to-day. There does not seem to be any justification for shirking the issue any longer. Here and now His Majesty's Government must proclaim that India is independent. We have not the least doubt that free India will not negotiate any separate treaties with the enemy powers but will whole-heartedly fight the aggressor along with the Allied nations. Events in India are rapidly moving towards a dangerous climax and there never was a period in the last hundred years when the feeling against Britain was so bitter as it is to-day. Before it is too late, we urge the British Prime Minister who has if he chooses, courage, vision and statesmanship, to settle this problem now and for all time in the interests of Britain and India."

The signatories are Mr. A. K. Fazal-ul-Haq, Premier of Bengal ; Khan Bahadur Allah Bux, President Azad Muslim Conference, Chief Minister of Sind ; Mr. Shyama Parshad Mukerjee, Working President, Hindu Mahasabha and Minister Bengal ; K. K. Habib Ullah, Nawab of Dacca and Minister Bengal ; Sardar Baldev Singh, Minister Punjab ; Master Tara Singh, President, Shromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee ; Sir Gokalchand Narang ; Sir Radha Krishanan, Vice-Chancellor, Benares Hindu University ; Mohd. Zahir-ud-Din, President All-India Moman Conference ; N. C. Chatterji, Working President, Bengal Hindu Mahasabha ; R. B. Mehar Chand Khanna, President, Frontier Hindu Mahasabha ; Raja Maheshwar Dayal, Working President, U. P. Hindu Mahasabha ;

more disorder, looting of shops, sporadic attacks on the Indian police accompanied from time to time by revolting atrocities, whole having the intention or at any rate, the effect of hampering the defence of India against the Japanese invader who stands on the frontier of Assam and also upon the eastern side of the Bay of Bengal.

“It may well be that these activities by the Congress party have been aided by Japanese fifth column work on widely extended scale and with the special directions to strategic points. It is noteworthy for instance that communications of the Indian forces defending Bengal on the Assam frontier have been specially attacked.

“In these circumstances, the Viceroy and the Government of India with the unanimous support of the Viceroy's Council, the great majority of which are Indian patriots and wise men, have felt it necessary to proclaim and suppress the Central and Provincial organs of the Association, which has become committed to hostile and criminal courses.

“Mr. Gandhi and the principal leaders have been interned under conditions of the highest comfort and consideration and will be kept out of harm's way until the troubles subside.

“It is fortunate indeed that the Congress party has no influence whatever with the martial races on whom the defence of India, apart from the British forces, largely depends. Many of these races are divided by unbridge-

able religious gulfs from the Hindu Congress and would never consent to be ruled by them, nor shall they ever be against their will so subjugated."

Mr. Churchill resumed : "There is no compulsory service in India, but upwards of one million Indians have volunteered to serve the cause of the United Nations in this world struggle. The bravery of Indian troops has been distinguished in many theatres of war and it is satisfactory to note that in these last two months when the Congress has been measuring its strength against the Government of India even 140,000 new volunteers for the army and navy came forward in loyal allegiance to the King Emperor, thus surpassing all records in order to defend their native land.

"So far as matters have gone to the present they have revealed the impotence of the Congress party either to induce or even sway the Indian army, to draw from their duty the enormous body of Indian officials or still less to stir the vast Indian masses. India is a continent almost as large and actually more populous than Europe and divided by racial and above all by religious differences far deeper than any that have separated the Europeans. The whole administration of the Government of 390 millions who live in India is carried on by Indians, there being under 600 British members of the Indian Civil Services. All public services are working.

"In five provinces (including two of the greatest

and comprising 110 million people), Provincial ministers responsible to their legislatures stand at their posts. In many places both in town and country the population has rallied to the support of the civil power.

“The Congress conspiracy against communications is breaking down. Acts of pillage and arson are being repressed and punished with an incredibly small loss of life. Less than 500 persons have been killed over this mighty area of territory and population and it has only been necessary to move a few brigades of British troops here and there in support of the civil power.

“In most cases rioters have been successfully dealt with by the Indian police. I am sure the House would wish me to pay a tribute to the loyalty and steadfastness of the brave Indian police as well as to the Indian official class generally whose behaviour has been deserving of the highest praise

“To sum up, the outstanding fact which has so far emerged from the violent action of the Congress party has been its non-representative character and powerlessness to throw into confusion the normal peaceful life of India.

“It is the intention of the Government to give all necessary support to the Viceroy and his Executive in the firm but tempered measures by which they are protecting the life of the Indian communities and leaving the British and Indian armies free to defend the soil of India against the Japanese.

"I may add that large reinforcements have reached India and that the number of white soldiers now in that country, although very small compared with its size and population, are larger than at any time in the British connection. I, therefore, feel entitled to report to the House that the situation in India at the moment gives no occasion for undue despondency or alarm."

Following this the Prime Minister answered many questions.

It is really very desirable and gratifying that the course of events is improving. But the facts showed that by then there had been little improvement. Moreover the factual news were all very heavily censored. As regards the Cripps Mission, those who have read the account remember what he really promised, and what was the anxiety of the Congress and how all parties in India rejected his proposal. As regards the Congress and its popularity and representative character, it may be pointed out that the Congress is sustained by its four anna members among the peasantry, the factory workers, the middle classes and traders, merchants and men of business in general, irrespective of their caste and creed. It is absolutely untrue to say that all 90 millions of Muslims are opposed to the Congress. The President of the Congress is himself a Muslim and the number of Muslim Congressmen is larger than the number of members of the Muslim League. The Momins claim to number 45 millions and they do



not follow Mr. Jinnah but support the Congress ideal and the Congress demand of independence of India. Similar support to the Congress ideal is accorded by members of the Ahrar Party, the Jamait-ul-Ulema, the Azad Conference and the Nationalist Muslim Party. So far as the independence demand is concerned there is no difference of opinion between the Congress and the Muslim League. Moreover the predominantly Muslim Province of N. W. F. is predominantly Congressite. It was only the other day that 8 out of the 11 provinces of India had Congress Ministries and they resigned on the issue of the Independence of India and while in office the Governors showered praise on them. As regards the other Ministries it is yet quite fresh in the minds of the people how the Bengal Ministry was rejected for its nationalist leanings and the Sind Ministry was dismissed as the Premier Khan Bahadur Allah Bux resigned his title as a protest against the repressive policy of the Government. As regards the depressed classes, it is the Congress under the inspiration and guidance of Mahatma Gandhi which of all parties and bodies has done the most to improve their social and economic position. Gandhi had risked his life for the uplift of the depressed classes and got temples thrown open to them.

As regards the Indian States' people the Government of India Act 1935 does not recognize or even mention them. According to it the Princes are all in all. It is

Congressmen and the Nationalists who have been trying to have their rights as citizens recognized. Numerous States' subjects are members of Congress. There are Congress committees in many States. The Indian States Peoples' Conferences have been presided over by the Congressmen among others. The Indian States' people are supporters of the Congress ideal of independence.

As regards the attitude of the Congress towards this war much has been said before. To call them as Fifth Columnists is a lie. Rather they are keen on making this war as a people's war.

It is true there is no compulsory service in India. But it is not correct to call the soldiers as volunteers. With them the main consideration for joining the army is the pay and allowances, etc.

There may be only 600 members of the Indian Civil Service and the whole administration of the Government of India may be carried on by Indians. But these Indians only carry out orders as subordinates to their higher English officers.

Mr. Churchill has said that not less than 500 persons have been killed, and it is so sad.

As regards the blame on the Congress that it has brought about the disturbances, it has already been said that the disturbances are the results of the spontaneous reaction of the people against the arrests of the Congress leaders. It is yet to be proved that the Congress is

responsible for any violent action. Rather it is the government that fired the first shot and refused negotiations with the Congress and is hence responsible for the unfortunate occurrences.

It is true that the majority of the Executive Councillors are Indians but whom are they responsible to, what portfolio they carry, what is their history, has the nation elected them, and has any one of them independent opinion ? They are all yes-men of the Government and for the fat salaries they draw.

‘Much concern and great disappointment’ at Mr. Churchill’s speech on the Indian situation was expressed by Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and Dr. M. R. Jaykar in the course of a joint statement issued to the Press on the 16th September.

“We have read with much concern and with great disappointment Mr. Churchill’s speech on the Indian situation in the House of Commons. In our considered opinion, a speech like this will in no way help but may worsen the situation. It may have a reassuring effect in America and other countries belonging to the United Nations, perhaps the hope of such a reaction was the dominating factor in shaping that speech.

“We have also read with equal concern Mr. Amery’s speech. Both these speeches give rise to certain questions. If as Mr. Amery says, “very soon after Sir Stafford Cripps left India, it became clear that under Mr. Gandhi’s inspiration, the Congress was steadily swing-

ing towards a policy of direct defiance at paralysis of the existing Government of India," the people of this country are entitled to know what steps Mr. Amery and the Government of India took to prevent matters reaching a catastrophic climax.

" If as Mr. Churchill attempts to make out, the Congress does not represent the vast mass of the people, may we ask why the Muslim League, the Hindu Mahasabha and other political bodies and the general public were ignored during the whole of the critical period ? We wonder what Sir Stafford Cripps will say to Mr. Churchill's plea about unrepresentative character of the Congress. Will he recall what he told both of us during our interview in Delhi, that in his opinion the Congress and the Muslim League alone mattered for the purposes of the settlement and that if he saw no prospect of such a settlement with them then we need expect no change."

Zia-ud-Din on September 17 in the Central Assembly in the debate on the present situation in India, declared that the Congress and the Muslim League did not differ on the main issue of independence and National Government.

Sir Abdul Halem Ghaznavi though opposed to the attitude of the Congress, said :—

"This time he (Mr. Churchill) has conceded that the 90 millions of Muslims are behind the Muslim League and opposed to the Congress, forgetting the existence of

very important parties with large following among the Muslims of India like the Jamait-ul-Ulema, the Momins, the Ahrars and the Azad Muslims, who do not owe allegiance to the Muslim League."

The All-India Hindu Mahasabha even passed a resolution demanding release of the Congress leaders and establishing National government in India and condemning the repressive policy of the government.

Khan Bahadur Allah Bux, the Premier of Sind, the head of one of the Ministries in office, referred to by Mr. Churchill in his historic speech, renounced his title of "Khan Bahadur and O. B. E." as a protest against the British Government's policy.

"Announcing this at a press conference this evening the Premier said, that the policy of the British Government was to continue their hold on India and persist in keeping her under subjection, to use her political and economic differences for propaganda purposes and to crush the national forces and to serve their own intentions."

Commenting on the Commons debate Mr. C. Rajagopal Achariar made a press statement saying, "After themselves ruling out all fresh elections on the excuse of war it was unfair to raise objections to the scheme of a provisional government on the ground of absence of responsibility.

"Some people raise the objection that the fighting forces of India are not in agreement with the demand

for provisional government. I wish for more reasons than one that this kind of loose talk should not be indulged in. We are prepared to accept if the British agree to a reference to the free and unfettered judgment of the soldiers of India for the establishment of a provisional government with national leaders. They would then fight with much greater enthusiasm. I go even so far as to suggest that a reference even to the British soldiers in India is likely to produce a result contrary to the present British policy of drift.

“The only consideration is now the defence of India. It is foolhardy to seek to defend India in the present manner and allow discontent and hatred to grow among the people towards the government. He is no soldier who believes that popular support is not an essential part in the defence of the country.”

It has been mentioned before that Mr. Allah Bux the Premier of Sind resigned his title of “Khan Bahadur” and O. B. E. as a protest against the British Government’s policy of repression in India. On that very score on October 10th he was dismissed from the office of the Premiership of Sind. Later, on November 28 according to his statement he was asked to resign the leadership of the national war front also. The following *communique* was issued from Government House on October 10.

“His Excellency the Governor of Sind has discussed with Mr. Allah Bux his recent renunciation of honours and the reasons for that renunciation given in his pub-

ished letter. In the light of that discussion he has had no option but to inform Mr. Allah Bux that he no longer possesses the Governor's confidence and that he cannot in consequence continue to hold office."

Mr. Allah Bux, a day before his dismissal from the office of Premiership, gave a statement on the Secretary of State's speech in the House of Commons :—

"The statement of Mr. Amery in the Commons yesterday confirms the estimate which the Indian public and Indian leaders have already formed of Churchill, Amery and Company.

"Mr. Amery talks of the aim, which he says Britain is solemnly pledged herself before the world. What is it that Britain has pledged herself to inform the world ? Has she pledged herself to anything definite at any definite period of time ?

"Even in the statement under consideration, Mr. Amery talks of Britain considering favourably any plan which all Indian parties may agree to, within the framework of the British declaration. That declaration refused to India immediate establishment of a national government responsible to the people of this country. That declaration merely concerns itself with things to happen after the war. India and England cannot settle on that basis. England cannot expect to win the war with Indian co-operation if the problem of India itself is left for settlement after the war.

"The goodwill of India can only be secured by

England by a real change in the angle of her vision. Indian leaders are all willing to co-operate in defending their own country and to make common cause with the Allies and make all sacrifices for the people.

"England talks "ad nauseum" of want of agreement among the people of this country. India knows too well this is only a stunt. Will England concede the demand of India for immediate self-government and make it conditional on agreement between the various parties among the people of India? That will be the touchstone of England's sincerity. Will Britain respond and give the world proof of its *bona fides*."

Mr. Wendel Wilkie, the rival of President Roosevelt even on October 27 urged the solution of the Indian problem. For this suggestion of his, his formal reception when he went to Toronto was cancelled. He said first, that in the vast areas of the world there is no longer any British Empire but instead a proud commonwealth of free nations. This is a statement of fact which should hurt no one's feelings. Second, he quoted the wisest men in China as declaring that when the aspirations of India for freedom were put aside to some future unguaranteed date it was not Great Britain that suffered in public esteem but United Nations."

Soon after this statement the Co-operative Commons Federation which is one of the main Canadian political parties, urged the Prime Minister Mr. Meckenzie King to take steps through the United Nations to reopen nego-



tiations, for self-government of India now as well as after the war. The negotiations should be linked with the immediate aim of totally defeating the Axis aggression and such special conditions are necessary to ensure the victory of the United Nations should by mutual consent be maintained.

‘Commenting on Mr. Wendel Wilkie’s speech’s referred to above, President Roosevelt said :—

“The Atlantic Charter applies to all Humanity.”

But Mr. Churchill, the British Prime Minister, on November 10 made an historic utterance on the existence of the British Empire, which includes India as well, after the war. He said in the course of his speech at the Mansion House luncheon addressed to the Lord Mayor’s Annual Banquet, “Let me however make clear. We mean to hold on our own. I have not become the King’s First Minister to preside over the liquidation of the British Empire. I am proud to be a member of the vast commonwealth and society of nations gathered around the ancient British monarch without which good cause might well have perished.”

This is the heart’s desire of Mr. Churchill, the top-most man at the helm of affairs in the British Empire and the most closely concerned, more closely than Smutts or Halifax or Herbert Morrison or Cripps who might utter any encouraging word to subject nations in the British Empire. Mr. Wilkie and President Roosevelt’s utterances are also equally important, but we

wonder if even after the war they would have continued to take the same interest in the affairs of the subject nations in the British Empire, generally and the vast country of India specially.

On the application of the Atlantic Charter to India what Louis Fisher said the other day is equally important. Unfortunately no part of his speech can be reproduced here as the Government has put a ban on it. The speech was published in Indian papers on May 25, 1943.

To resume the narrative, an attempt was made on November 12 by C. Rajagopalachariar to end the Indian deadlock and with that purpose in view he appealed to the Viceroy for permission to see Gandhi in the Jail to obtain his view-point, but the permission was refused to him.

Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru at a press conference declared that the Viceroy should call a conference of all parties and that the India Office should be abolished.

"If," said Tej Bahadur Sapru, "he calls such a conference including the Congress, very probably he would insist upon the Congress withdrawing civil disobedience and in my opinion the Congress should in the interest of peace and harmony definitely recall civil disobedience."

"If the conference is called," said Sir Tej, "I should urge friends to come with an open mind, with mind made up only on one issue, namely that there must be

settlement among ourselves and we must bury the hatchet."

Earlier in the course of his observations, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru commented on the situation in the country and said, "I have often wondered why between May and August when things reached a crisis, no step was taken by the Government of India or the Secretary of State to deal with that situation. Political evils can be dealt with by political remedies, not merely by administrative remedies but the Government of India the Secretary of State, and Provincial Governments are in habit of thinking in terms of law and order."

Sir Tej Bahadur made an appeal to his countrymen with regard to acts of sabotage and said, "These acts of sabotage must cease. The situation is getting dangerous for the bomb thrower has appeared once again, I believe that force which had ceased to be operative in India for ten years are reasserting themselves. It is my conviction that neither acts of sabotage or disorder are going to do us any good.

"After 7 years of Lord Linlithgow's administration the country is much more divided than it was when he came here. I am sorry to say this."

On November 20, Dr. Shyama Prasad Mukerjee resigned from the Ministry of the Bengal Cabinet as the British Government is unwilling to transfer the real power to Indians and settle the Indian problem consistent with the legitimate rights and aspirations of the

Indian people and because the Ministers in the present system of government in the provinces had only responsibility without power. His statement is given below.

“Meanwhile let me make it clear beyond any doubt whatsoever that my resignation is not due to any difference of opinion between myself and the Chief Minister or any of my colleagues or any member of the progressive Coalition Party to which I have the honour to belong. I deeply value the spirit of mutual trust and co-operation in which we have jointly worked during the last year.

“It will be idle for me to deny that we did pass through a period of constant struggle, a struggle between us and those administrators who still fondly cling to the old ideas of imperialism and believe that India can be ruled for ever against the will of her people.

“I have expressed my disapproval of the policy pursued by the government. No government can allow serious disturbances of public order to take place, specially during a period of grave emergency without detriment to the welfare of the country as whole. But I felt and I do feel now that mere suppressing of external manifestations of discontent is not the sole function of a government calling itself civilised and progressive and fighting the doctrine of totalitarianism out of existence.

"The problem in India to-day is that we Indians have not the power to mould the destinies of our country according to our will. We want to maintain the integrity and freedom of our country. We do not want the domination of the Axis Powers or of any foreign rule. We want the era of Indian slavery to end for good. There was and is ample room for co-operation between a free Indian and the Allied nations to fight the aggression. The continuance of the present deadlock is inevitable so long as the policy of the British Government remains unchanged.

"I did my best during the last three months to mobilise public opinion in favour of a settlement which would be consistent with the legitimate rights and aspirations of the Indian people, and at the same time vitalize the national defence of India in full collaboration with the Allied Powers. There was, however, no response whatsoever from the Government. The real obstacle to a settlement is not Indian disunity but unwillingness on the part of the British Government to transfer power to Indians.

"One of the main reasons I did not tender my resignation three months ago was the peculiar position which Bengal occupied during this critical period. In spite of the all India situation being what it is, there would have been justification for my continuing in office if I would, even in some measure, serve the interests of my people and minimize the hardships and suffering thrown on them during the period of war.

"The British Prime Minister and the Secretary of State have from time to time taken pride in declaring that even to-day millions of Indians are living under a system of administration where the functions of government are in the hands of Ministers, responsible to the Legislature. Let me tell him without any exaggeration whatsoever that the constitution that functions under the so-called system of provincial autonomy is a colossal mockery.

"My experience as a Provincial Minister for 11 months justifies me in stating clearly and categorically that Minister while possessing great responsibilities for which they are answerable to the people and the legislature have very little powers especially in matters concerning the rights and liberties of the people. In Bengal dual government has functioned during the last year. The Governor has chosen to act in many vital matters in disregard of the wishes of the Ministers and depended on the advice of a section of permanent officials.

"If the British Prime Minister or the Secretary of State has the courage to direct an enquiry into the manner in which popular rights have been disregarded against the advice of responsible ministers the hollowness of their claim that Dominions Status is already in action in India will stand exposed.

"Apart from any general dissatisfaction which the attitude of the Governor to specific matters in respect

of which I have failed to obtain relief, even partially, relate to the imposition of collective fines and handling of the situation in Midnapore, I make bold to say without going into details, that collective fines have been imposed in Bengal in disregard of the Ordinance itself. Fines have been imposed on Hindus in general irrespective of their guilt. Up till now the Governor has declined in exercise of his individual judgment to give relief or to reconsider the present policy although repeated demands were made by us.

“As regards Midnapore, I do not ignore that the political movement took serious turn in some area of the district. From the point of view of the Government legitimate measures taken to check lawlessness are understandable. But the repression that continued there has been of extraordinary character.

“We are powerless to order enquiries to deal with the officers concerned. But the staggering feature of the administration of Midnapore comes after the havoc caused by the cyclone and flood on October 18. There is not the least doubt that there has been grave negligence on the part of officers of the government with regard to the organization of immediate relief. We have been helpless in securing redress on account of the unsympathetic attitude of certain officials and of the Governor himself. I have no hesitation in asserting that unless the situation radically altered in Midnapore,

relief operation will become meaningless. From what I have personally seen and my discussion with various people inside and outside jail I feel sure that if the situation is approached with tact, sympathy and a little of the human touch all sections of the people in Midnapore will rise to a man to co-operate with the government in conducting relief operations. .

.. Public opinion must immediately assert itself, both with regard to collective fines and the Midnapore situation. For the sake of elementary justice and for humanitarian reasons, Bengal must rise to a man and end arbitrary rule, forced on the province by thoughtless and reactionary administrators.

..I know all the members of the Council of Ministers feel very strongly about these matters, but they find themselves helpless. Two of them Mr. Santosh Kumar Basu and Mr. Pran Nath Bannerji are to my knowledge, prepared to come out of the Ministry any moment if they are asked to do so, but it is just possible that they with the help of their colleagues, may in the altered situation, created by my resignation secure immediate relief in some important directions. Whether they can do so or not will be evident in the very near future. If they can, they will earn the gratitude of their countrymen. If they cannot they will not hesitate to record their protest and connections with the present administration."



By the way, early in the month of December the fear of Japanese invasion on India began to increase and the Japanese planes attacked Chittagong on December 7. This was the first attack made on an Indian harbour.

On December 11, Mr. Amery, the Secretary of State for India made a review of the disturbances in India in Commons. Answering a question in the House of Commons for information respecting the disturbances in India during the last fortnight, he said, " Apart from an attack on a police station in Behar, there has been no report of mob violence during the last fortnight. Sabotage in minor forms and other symptoms of lawlessness persist in Bengal and Bombay and one case of derailment with loss of life is reported from Assam."

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"Asked how many floggings have taken place since last March, how many people had been burnt to death and when a full report of the loss of life, destruction of property, criminal acts and the number of arrests would be available, Mr. Amery said, "My information is not complete and up to date, but I have asked the Government of India to furnish a comprehensive report on the points referred to. He said that the report being a full one would presumably take a little time to complete. There had been atleast two cases of murder by burning."

At this time the trouble in this North Western Province that had remained so far quite quiet began to increase. The Red Shirts in organised batches came into the courts. They were all arrested. They displayed wonderful spirit of non-violence.

On December 11, Chittagong was again raided. Afterwards bombing became more frequent.

Now President Roosevelt who had been closely in touch with the Indian affairs appointed a personal representative in India to get first-hand information. Mr. William Phillips was chosen for the purposes. He reached Karachi in the month of January, 1948. In an interview with the '*Daily Mail*' Mr. Phillips said, "I am going to India with open mind. For a long time I have been greatly interested in India and her problem."

On December 17, His Excellency the Viceroy of India, Lord Linlithgow made a long speech at the annual meeting of the Associated Chamber of Commerce. Referring to the political deadlock in India he denied that the trouble was due to the unwillingness of Britain to part with power. "On the contrary" His Excellency averred : "The trouble was due to Britain's readiness to part with power. He said that the Britain was willing to transfer power to the people but there was disagreement amongst the political parties as to whom the power should be transferred. Referring to the recent trouble, he characterised it as an uprising of great

gravity and severity." "It was," he said : the war of a numerical, small but powerful section. It had caused immense, serious dislocation of communications and destruction of property, private and public. The situation was, however, well in hand."

It is so sad that the disturbances had caused serious dislocation and destruction. But it is a novel kind of argument that there are serious differences among the sections of Indian people expressly because Britain is too ready to part with power. This is exactly to blame the sick man who is doing his level best to become well that he is sick because the doctor is too ready to give the medicine. This is to sweep with one stroke the hard labour of the Congress for the last half a century. Had Britain really evinced such an attitude there would have been no quarrel between the people of India and Britain. Lord Linlithgow really discovered a very easy way of taking the burden of responsibility off the shoulders of Britain and putting it on India. The facts prove that this discovery is meaningless. Nobody took the Viceroy seriously for this act of distortion and concoction.

On December 28, Calcutta was raided by Japanese for the first time. It was also raided many times afterwards even.

"For the first time in the history of Indian journalism really one hundred newspapers of the country joined in protest against the unjust order passed on the press by the C. P. Government calculated to hide the disgraceful

Chimur incident. The *Amrita Bazar Patrika* in its leading article on January 14 summed up the facts of the case very ably in the following words:—

It is well-known that some Government servants had been murdered in that village early in August last. The accused were in the course sent up for trial and the judge, on the evidence placed before him came to certain conclusion. The C. P. Government issued a communique on the basis of that judgment and stated that there was no foundation for the allegations made by certain inhabitants of the village against the Police and Military posted there. It was alleged for the instance that the troops and the policemen concerned tried to terrorise the village and committed excesses in disregard of the elementary decencies of civilised life. There was a public demand for expert and impartial enquiry into these allegations which the C. P. Government were not prepared to concede. One of the grounds urged by them was that in all these cases the women complainants were related to or connected with the persons involved in the unfortunate events of August and that there was absolutely no case for investigation into allegations emanating from interested sources.

“ Professor Bhansoli took up the matter and joined in the public demand for an enquiry. Failing to get redress from the C. P. Government, he approached the Hon'ble Mr. M. S. Aney. Overseas Member and whose

native village was close to Chimur and was expected to take personal interest in the matter and use his high office for the end of in-justice. Mr. Aney, however, declined to intervene and the result was that Professor as a satyagrahi resorted to fasting unto death on the issue of grievances. It was then that the C. P. Government issued the order calculated to block out all relevant news about the matter.

The All-India Newspapers' Editors Conference took a serious view of the order banning all news of Professor Bhansoli's fast and even a mention to this order. At its Bombay meeting a resolution was passed declaring this act of C. P. Government to be a breach of the understanding between the Conference and the Central Government and demanding redress from the latter. In the event of the Central Government not showing any intention to compel the C. P. Government to withdraw the order, the editors decided to stop the publication of certain categories of news including the New Year's Honours List. It was also decided that newspapers who were members of the Conference would suspend publication for one day, viz., on 6th January. This All-India hartal was observed nearly by a hundred newspapers all over the country. The order in question related to one calculated to stop the demand for an enquiry into serious allegations of dishonour done to women. When the public expected the British own newspapers in India to take up the strongest attitude in

this case the Statesman backed out and did not join the hartal. The Madras Government at present run by the Governor took up a vindictive attitude against the newspapers that did not publish the Honours List and adopted measures to punish them. This unprecedented unity amongst the Indian newspapers, however shook the Government of the Central provinces to its senses within a rather short period of 12 days and a communique was issued to the effect that there "was no intention on the part of the Government to attribute any ulterior motive to women of Chhimur generally, and the Government attaches and always attached greatest importance to the maintenance of discipline among the military and police engaged in restoration of order and considers the respect for honour of women and their protection from molestation is and shall be the first essential of good discipline".

"It remained for Professor Bhansoli to teach the British official of C. P. that molestation of even a single woman is a crime not only against society but against God."

At this time the Turkish delegation left Ankara to visit India. It reached here on January 15. It was given a warm reception. But it was an official function as the delegation was not free to see anything it liked and meet anyone who interested it. It was only after much agitation in the press that delegation was allowed to meet the Nationalist India Journalists.

## **CHAPTER VII**

### **MAHATMA GANDHI'S FAST AND AFTERWARDS.**

All of a sudden on the 10th of February, 1943, a communique of the Government appeared in the press that revealed that Mahatma Gandhi had undertaken a three weeks' fast. It was also revealed that correspondence between Mahatma Gandhi and the Government had been going since August 12 last year. But no hint about the correspondence appeared in the press earlier till Mahatmaji actually undertook the fast.

Along with it within two or three days the Government released the whole correspondence that had passed between Gandhiji and the Viceroy and between Gandhiji and Mr. Tottenham, the Additional Secretary to the Government of India in the Home Department.

In the first letter, Gandhiji refuted all the charges that were levelled against him and the Congress by the Government of India in their resolution already referred to that they passed in the evening of August 8, against the A. I. C. C. resolution of the even date. It is reproduced as follows :

**August, 14, 1942.**

Dear Lord Linlithgo,

The Government of India were wrong in precipitating the crisis. The Government resolution justifying this is full of misrepresentations. That you have the approval of your Indian 'colleagues can have no significance, except this, that in India you can always command such services. That co-operation is an additional justification for the demand of withdrawal irrespective of what people and parties may say.

The Government of India should have waited at least till the time I inaugurated mass action. I had publicly stated that I fully contemplated sending you a letter before taking concrete action. It was to be an appeal to you for an impartial examination of the Congress case. As you know, the Congress has readily filled in every omission that has been discovered in the conception of its demand. So could have dealt with every difficulty if you had given me the opportunity. The precipitate action of the Government leads one to think that they were afraid that the extreme caution and gradualness with which the Congress was moving towards action might cause world opinion veer round to the Congress as it had already begun doing, and expose the hollowness of the ground for the Government's rejection of the Congress demand. They should surely have waited for an authentic report of my speeches on Friday and on Saturday night after the passing of the resolution by the All India Congress Committee. You would have found in them that I



would not hastily begin action. You should have taken advantage of the interval foreshadowed in them and explored every possibility of satisfying the Congress demand.

The resolution "The Government of India have waited patiently in the hope that wiser counsels might prevail. They have been disappointed in that hope," I suppose wiser counsels here means abandonment of its demand by the Congress. Why should the abandonment of the demand legitimate at all times be hoped for by a Government pledged to guarantee independence to India? Is it a challenge that could only be met by immediate repression instead of patient reasoning with the demanding party? I venture to suggest that it is a long draft upon the credulity of mankind to say that the acceptance of the demand "would plunge India into confusion." Anyway the summary rejection of the demand has plunged the nation and the Government into confusion. The Congress was making every effort to identify India with the Allied cause.

The Government resolution says "The Governor General in council has been aware too for some days past of dangerous preparations by the Congress Party for unlawful and in some cases violent activities directed among other things to interruption of communications and public utility services, the organisation of strikes, and interference with defence measures including recruitment." This is a gross distortion of the reality.

Violence was never contemplated at any stage. A definition of what could be included in non-violent action has been interpreted in a sinister and subtle manner, as if the Congress was preparing for violent actions. Every thing was openly discussed among Congress circles, for nothing was to be done secretly. And why is it tempering with your loyalty if I ask you to give up a job which is harming the British people ?

Instead of publishing behind the backs of principal Congressmen the misleading paragraph the Government, immediately they came to know of the "preparations, should have brought to book the parties concerned with the preparations. That would have been the appropriate course. By their unsupported allegations in the resolution they have laid themselves open to the charge of unfair dealing. The Congress movement was intended to evoke in the people the measure of sacrifice sufficient to compel attention. It was intended to demonstrate what measure of popular support it had. Was it wise at this time of the day to seek to suppress a popular movement avowedly non-violent ?

The Government resolution further says "The Congress is not India's mouthpiece. Yet in the interests of securing their own dominance and in the pursuit of the totalitarain policy its leaders have consistently empeded the efforts made to bring India to full nationhood." It is a gross libel thus to accuse the oldest organisation of India. This language lies ill in the mouth

of a Government, which has; as can be proved from published records, consistently thwarted every national effort for attaining freedom, and sought to suppress the Congress by hook or crook.

The Government of India have not condescended to consider the Congress offer that if simultaneous with the declaration of the independence of India they could not trust the Congress to form a stable provisional government they should ask the Muslim League to do so, and that any national government formed by the League would be loyally accepted by the Congress. Such an offer is hardly consistent with the charge of totalitarianism against the Congress.

Let me examine the Government offer. "It is that as soon as hostilities cease, India shall devise for herself, with full freedom of decision and on a basis embracing all and not only a single party, the form of Government which she regards as most suited to her conditions." Has this offer any reality about it? All parties have not agreed now, will it be any more possible after the War? And if the parties have to act before independence is in their hands? Parties grow up like mushrooms, for without proving their representative character, the Government will welcome them as they have done in the past, and if they, the parties, oppose the Congress and its activities, though they may do lip homage to independence, frustration is inherent in

the Government offer. Hence the logical cry of withdrawal first. Only after the end of British power and a fundamental change in the political status of India from bondage to freedom, will the formation of a truly representative government, whether provisional or permanent, be possible. The living burial of the author of the demand has not resolved the deadlock, it has aggravated it.

Then the resolution proceeds. "The suggestion put forward by the Congress Party that the millions of India uncertain as to the future are ready, despite the sad lessons of so many martyr countries, to throw themselves into the arms of the invaders is one that the Government of India cannot accept as a true representation of the feeling of the people of this great country." I do not know about the millions, but I can give my own evidence in support of the Congress evidence. No imperial power likes to be told that it is in peril. It is because the Congress is anxious for Great Britain to avoid the fate that has overtaken other imperial powers that it asks her to shed imperialism voluntarily by declaring India independent. The Congress has not approached the movement with any but the friendliest motives. Congress seeks to kill imperialism as much for the sake of the British people and humanity as for India. Notwithstanding assertions to the contrary, I maintain that the Congress has no interests of its own, apart from that of the whole of India and the world.

The following passage from peroration in the resolu-

tion is interesting. "But on them lies the task of defending India, of maintaining India's capacity to wage war, of safeguarding India's interests, of holding the balance between the different section of her people without fear or favour." All I can say is that it is a mockery of truth after the experience of Malaya, Singapore and Burma. It is sad to find the Government of India claiming to hold the balance between the parties for which it is itself demonstrably responsible.

One thing more, the declared issue is common between the Government of India and us. To put it in the most concrete terms it is the protection of the freedom of China and Russia. The Government of India think that the freedom of India is not necessary for winning the cause. I think exactly the opposite. I have taken Jawahar Lal Nehru as my measuring rod. His personal contacts make him feel much more the misery of impending ruin of China and Russia than I can and may I say than even you can. In that misery he tried to forget his old quarrel with imperialism. He dreads much more than I do the success of Facism and Nazism. I have argued with him for days together. He fought against my position with a passion which I have no words to describe. But the logic of facts overwhelmed him. He yielded when he saw clearly that without the freedom of India that of the other two was in great jeopardy. Surely you are wrong in having imprisoned such a powerful friend and ally. If not withstanding the common cause the

Government's answer to the Congress demand is hasty repression, they will not wonder if I draw the inference that it was not so much the Allied cause that weighed with the British Government as the unexpressed determination to cling to the possession of India as an indispensable part of the imperial policy. This determination led to the rejection of the Congress demand and precipitated repression. The present mutual slaughter on a scale never before known to history is suffocating enough. But the slaughter of truth accompanying the butchery and endorsed by the falsity of which the resolution is, adds strength to the Congress position.

It causes me deep pain to have to send you this long letter. But however much I dislike your action, I remain the same friend you have known me. I would still plead for reconsideration of the Government of India's whole policy. Do not disregard the pleading of one who claims to be sincere friend of the British people. Heaven guide you!

I am,

Yours sincerely,

M. K. Gandhi,

To this letter the Viceroy replied that he could not accept his Criticism of the resolution of the Governor-General in council and his request to reconsider the Government's policy.

**Mahatma Gandhi then wrote back to the Secretary to the Government of India on Sept. 23, 1942. saying, "Had the Government but waited my contemplated letter to His Excellency the Viceroy and the result there after, no calamity would have overtaken the country. The reported deplorable destruction would have most certainly been avoided.**

**"In spite of all that has been said to the contrary, I claim that the Congress policy still remains unequivocally non-violent. The wholesale arrest of the Congress leaders seems to have made the people wild with rage to the point of losing self-control. I feel that the Government, not the Congress, are responsible for the destruction that has taken place. The only right course for the Government seems to me to be to release the Congress leaders, withdraw all repressive measure and explore ways and means of conciliation. Surely the Government have ample resources to deal with any overt-act of violence. Repression can only breed discontent and bitterness."**

**An oral acknowledgement was sent to this letter by the Secretary,**

**Mahatma Gandhi then wrote another personal letter to Viceroy, after three months on the eve of New Years day, stating:**

**"I had thought, we were friends, and should**

still love to think so. However what happened since the 9th August makes me wonder whether you still regard me as a friend. Your arrest of me, the communique you issued thereafter, your reply to Rajaji and the reasons given there of, Mr. Amery's attack on me and much else I can catalogue, show that at some stage or other you must have suspected my bona fides. If I have not ceased to be your friend why did you not before taking drastic action tell me of your suspicions and make yourself sure of your facts. I had given myself six months. The period is drawing to a close, so is my patience. The law of Satyagraha, as I know it prescribes a remedy in such moments of trial. In a sentence it is "crucify the flesh by fasting". That same law forbids its use except as a last resort. I do not want to use it if I can avoid it. This is the way to avoid it, convince me of my error or errors and I shall make ample amends. You can send for me or send some one who knows your mind and can carry conviction. There are many other ways if you have the will. May I expect an early reply. May the New Year bring peace to us all."

The Viceroy then wrote back saying,

"I have been profoundly depressed during recent months first by the policy that was adopted by the Congress in August, secondly, because while that policy gave rise, as it was obvious it must throughout the country to violence and crime (I say nothing of the risks



to the country from outside aggression), no word of condemnation for that violence and crime should have come from you or from the Working Committee. When you were first at Poona, I know that you were not receiving newspapers, and I accepted that as explaining your silence. When arrangements were made that you and the Working Committee should have such newspapers as you desired, I felt certain that the details those newspapers contained of what was happening would shock and distress you as much as it has us all, and your condemnation of it would be categorical and widely known. But that was not the case, and it has been a real disappointment to me, all the more when I think of these murders, the burning alive of police officials, the wrecking of trams, the destruction of property, the misleading of these young students, which has done so much harm to India's good name and the Congress party.

"But if I am right in reading your letter to mean that in the light of what has happened you wish to retrace your steps and dissociate yourself from the policy of last summer you have only to let me know and I will at once consider the matter further. And if I have failed to understand your object, you must not hesitate to let me know without delay in what respect I have done so and tell me what positive suggestion you wish to put to me"

Mahatma Gandhi then wrote to Lord Linlithgo on:

January 19, as follows.

"The inference you draw from my letter is, I am afraid not correct. I have re-read your letter in the light of your interpretation, but have failed to find your meaning in it. I wanted to fast and should still want to if nothing comes out of our correspondence, and I have to be a helpless witness to what is going on in the country, including the privations of the millions owing to the Universal Scarcity stalking the land.

"If I could be convinced of my error or worse, of which you are evidently, I should need to consult nobody, so far as my action is concerned, to make a full and open confession and make ample amends. But I have not any conviction of error.

"Of course I deplore the happenings which have taken place since 9th August last. But have I not laid the whole blame for them at the door of the Government of India?

"I can say from the house-top, that I am as confirmed a believer in non-violence as I have ever been. You may not know that any violence on the part of the Congress workers I have condemned openly and unequivocally. I have even done public penance more than once. I must not worry you with examples. The point I wish to make is that on every such occasion I was a free man. You will forgive me for expressing an opinion challenging yours. I am certain that nothing but would have resulted if you had accepted my hand and granted me the interview, which (had I announced on

V. R. NAKLA  
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the night of the 8th August I was to seek. But that was not to be.

To sum up.....

1, If you want me to act singly, convince me that I was wrong and I will make ample amends.

2, If you want me to make any proposal on behalf of the Congress, you should put me among the Congress Working Committee members. I do plead with you to make up your mind to end the *impasse*.

“If I am obscure or have not answered your letter fully please point out the omission and I shall make an attempt to give you satisfaction. I have no mental reservation.”

The Viceroy replied on January 25, saying

“I made clear to you in my last letter that, however reluctantly, the course of events, and my familiarity with what has been taking place has left me no choice but to regard the Congress movement, and you as its authorised and fully empowered spokesman at the time of the decision of last August, as responsible for the sad campaign of violence and crime, and revolutionary activity which has done so much harm, and so much injury to India's credit, since last August.

“If you are anxious to inform me that you repudiate or dissociate yourself from the resolution of the 9th August and the policy which that resolution represents, and if you can give me appropriate assurances as regards

the future, I shall, I need not say, be very glad to consider the matter further."

In reply to this Mahatma Gandhi wrote to the Viceroy on January 29, as follows :

"Was not the drastic and unwarranted action of the Government responsible for the reported violence? You have not even said what part of the August resolution is bad or offensive in your opinion. The Government goaded the people to the point of madness. They started leonine violence in the shape of the arrests already referred to. That violence is not any the less so, because it is organised on a scale so gigantic that, it displaces the Mosaic Law of 'tooth for tooth' by that of ten thousand for one—not to mention the corollary of the Mosaic law *i.e.* of non resistance as enunciated by Jesus Christ, I cannot interpret in any other manner the repressive measures of the all powerful Government of India.

"If I cannot get soothing balm for my pain, I must resort to the law prescribed by satyagrahis, namely, a fast according to capacity. I must commence after the early morning breakfast of the 9th February (later changed to 10th February) a fast for 21 days ending on the morning of the 2nd March. Usually during my fasts, I take water with the addition of salts. But now-a-days my system refuses water. This time, therefore, I propose to add juices of citrus fruit to make water drinkable for my wish is not to fast unto death, but to

survive the ordeal, if God so wills. This fast can be ended sooner by the Government giving the needed relief.

P. S. As you should be aware the Congress is willing and prepared for the Government inviting Mr. M. A. Jinnah and to form a National Government, subject to such agreed adjustments as may be necessary for the duration of the war, such Government being responsible to a fully elected assembly."

To this the Viceroy on the 5th February replied saying :

I have ample information that the campaign of sabotage has been conducted under secret instructions circulated in the name of All-India Congress Committee, that well-known Congressmen have organised and freely taken part in acts of violence and murder. You may rest assured that the charges against the Congress will have to be met sooner or later and it will then be for you and your colleagues to clear yourselves before the world if you can. And if in the meanwhile you yourself, by any action such as you now appear to be contemplating attempt to find an easy way out, the judgment will go against you by default. I hope and pray that wiser counsels may yet prevail with you. I trust sincerely that in the light of what I have said you may think better of your resolution. I regard the use of a fast for political purposes as a form of political blackmail (hinsa) for which there can be no moral justification"

Mahatma Gandhi again wrote back to the Viceroy on the 7th February :

"That you as a friend, can impute such a base and cowardly motive to me passes comprehension. You also described it as a form of political blackmail. And you quote my previous writing on the subject against me. I abide by my writings. I wonder whether you have yourself read those writings.

"You say that the time is not yet ripe to publish the charges against the Congress. Have you ever thought of the possibility of their being found baseless when they are put before an impartial Tribunal? Or that some of the conderaned persons might have died in the meanwhile, or that some of the evidence that the living can produce might become unavailable.

"You have left me no loophole of escaping the ordeal.

"Despite your description of it (fast) as a form of political blackmail, it is on my part meant to be an appeal to the Highest Tribunal for justice which I have failed to secure from you. If I do not survive the ordeal I shall go to the judgment Seat with the fullest faith in my innocence. Posterity will judge between you as representative of an all-powerful Government and me as a humble man who has tried to serve his country and humanity through it."

Reply to the above letter was sent by Mr. Tottenham, Additional Secretary to the Government of India, on the 7th February which says :

"The Government of India, as you will see from their statement, would be very reluctant to see you fast and

**I am instructed to inform you that should you persist in your intention you will be set at liberty for the purpose, and for the duration, of your fast as from the time of its commencement. During the period of your fast there will be no objection to your proceeding where you wish."**

Upon this Mahatma Gandhi wrote back to Mr. Tottenham saying :

**"The impending fast has not been conceived to be taken as a free man. If therefore I am released, there will be no fast in terms of my correspondence. I have no desire to be released under false pretences."**

Mr. Tottenham sent a reply saying :

**"If you are not prepared to take advantage of that fast and if you will fast while in detention, you will do so solely on your own responsibility and at your own risk. In that event you will be at liberty to have your own medical attendants, and also to receive visits from friends with the permission of the Government during its fast."**

Thus the fast which became inevitable commenced on the 10th February at the Agha Khan Palace, Government having allowed access to Gandhi to his near relatives and friends and a syndicate of doctors including Dr. B. C. Roy, Dr. Gilder and Major-General Candy Surgeons General to the Government of Bombay. These surgeons were allowed to issue daily bulletines regarding Gandhiji's condition.

The news of the fast created a stir in India from one end to the other. Everywhere meetings were held to pray for the safety of Gandhiji, and his long life ; at most of the places during the fast, shops, schools, colleges, municipal offices, private firms and business chambers were closed and all business was suspended for a number of days. Everywhere people apprehended danger to the life of Gandhiji in view of the long fast and his weak health and advanced age and they demanded his unconditional release and the release of other Congress leaders in the jail. Everyday there were streams of most fervent prayers from millions of souls that had resorted, as the last resort, to knocking at the door of the most merciful Father. This went on till Gandhiji was expected to pull through the fast. Even Government servants in Delhi prayed for Gandhiji's life and demanded unconditional release in front of the Viceregal lodge. For all the 24 hours during these 21 days Gandhiji's name was on the lips of the people and his frail body as the focus of their attention. This shows the extent of Gandhiji's popularity with Indians—their concern for him. At many places people individually as well as collectively fasted for one or more days. Not only in India, people abroad even showed the same concern towards Gandhij.

The Indian leaders of all shades of opinions and of different parties held meetings in Delhi and prayed for safety and long life of the Mahatma and sent a cablegram to Mr. Churchill, Stalin, Roosevelt and Marshal



Chiang Kai Shek for interruption and immediate release of the Mahatma. When the Mahatma's condition during his fast took a serious turn three members of the Viceroy's Executive Council Mr. N. R. Sirkar, Mr. Homy Mody and Mr. Aney resigned in protest against the Government's policy of detention of Gandhiji in the grave hour.

A brief account of the Leaders' Conference is as follows :—

A very large gathering of representative men belonging to different communities, Hindus, Mohammadans, Parsis, Sikhs and British met at Delhi on Friday, the 19th February, to give expressions to the feelings in the country that Mahatma Gandhi should be enabled to end his fast. In the absence of Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru on the first day of the conference, the proceedings were opened by Mr. Rajgopalachariar in a short speech during which among other things he said, "Reports about Gandhiji's health are none too good." After the speech the meeting set up a committee to draft a resolution to be placed before the conference. The drafting committee adopted a resolution urging the release of Mahatma Gandhi, and in view of the urgency of situation, forwarded it immediately to His Excellency the Viceroy of India. The resolution runs as under.

"This conference representing different creeds, communities and interests in India gives expression to the interest of the future of India and international goodwill, Mahatma Gandhi should be released immediately and unconditionally. This conference views with the

gravest concern the serious situation that will arise if the Government fail to take timely action and prevent a catastrophe. This conference therefore urges the Government to release Mahatma Gandhi forthwith."

At the meeting of the conference held on the 20th February under the presidentship of Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru the resolution quoted above was moved by Dr. M. R. Jayakar and adopted unanimously. Among those who spoke on the resolution were Sir Maharaj Singh, Indian Christian, Dr. Shyama Prasad Mukerjee, Sir Haji Kasem Mitta, Master Tara Singh, Dr. Mackenzie (Principal, Wilson College, Bombay), Sir A. H. Ghaznavi, Sh. Sarla Devi, Mr. Allah Bux (Ex-Premier, Sind), N. M. Joshi (in the name of Trade Union), Maulana Ahmad Said (Secretary Jamait-ul-Ulma), Mr. Zahir-ud-Din (President, Momin Conference), Mr. Abdul Qayum (voicing the feeling of Pathans of N. W. F. P.), Mr. Humayun Kabir, Dr. G. L. Mehta, Mr. Rana Dev (Communist) and Pandit Hirdya Nath Kunzru. Mr. K. M. Munshi proposed and Sardar Sant Singh seconded a vote of thanks to the chair and the Conference adjourned. The resolution together with the names of the supporters was sent to the Viceroy at once.

The following communication dated 20th February from the Private Secretary to the Viceroy was received by Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru:

"His Excellency has asked me to say that he had received and considered the resolution adopted by the

conference under your chairmanship, of which you were good enough to send him a copy to-day. The attitude of Government of India in the matter of Mr. Gandhi's fast is set out clearly and in detail in the communique which they issued on the 10th February, a copy of which I enclose for convenience of reference. No new factor has emerged since that date and as the Government of India's communique bring out clearly, responsibility in connection with his fast rests solely with Mr. Gandhi, with whom, and not with the Government the decision to bring to an end must rest."

The Viceroy's reply caused disappointment and gloom among the leaders gathered there. Cables following the lines of the resolution passed at the conference with the names of the supporters along with a list of some of the speeches were also sent to Mr. Churchill, Mr. Amery, Mr. Arthur (leader of Opposition in the House of Commons) and Mr. William Phillips.

The standing committee of the conference held a discussion on the Viceroy's reply on the 21st February and the meeting authorised the President to carry on further correspondence on the subject with the Viceroy and convene meeting if and when needed.

The text of the cable addressed to the Premier of Britain on behalf of the Leaders' Conference held is as follows :—

"Three hundred public-men from different parts of India representing various communities, creeds and

interests including commerce and industry, landed interests, workers, Communists, Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Parsis and British missionaries met yesterday at New Delhi and unanimously passed a resolution urging immediate and unconditional release of Mahatma Gandhi whose condition is fast approaching a crisis. We fear that unless immediately released he will pass away. We wish to explain to British public opinion that the Mahatma is fasting only to be able to review the situation as freeman and to advise the people accordingly and on the issue of independence. We are convinced that the terms of his letter of 23rd September, recently published by Government amount to an unequivocal disapproval on behalf of himself and the Congress of all acts of violence. The chairman of the conference, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru submitted the resolution to the Viceroy yesterday afternoon and immediately afterwards he received a reply from the Viceroy declining to interfere as no new factor has arisen to alter the previous decision and enclosing the official communication of the 10th February. We deeply deplore that the advice of so many representatives and responsible men should have been summarily turned down by the Viceroy.

“We firmly believe that if the Mahatma's life is spared a way will be opened to the promotion of peace and goodwill as surely as his death as a British prisoner will intensify public embitterment. The charges brought by the Government against the Mahatma do not rest

## **Leaders' Conference in the following terms**

**"Mahatma Gandhi has been called a rebel, but," said Sir Tej Bahdur Sapru, "there was a rebel called Smutts who is rendering the greatest possible service to the Empire. There was another rebel De Valera, whom the British Government wanted to remain in the Empire."**

**"I believe," Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru declared, "that the lesson which is reinforced by the British history is that the British Government has always settled with rebels rather than loyalists. I am not downhearted when Mahatma Gandhi is put down by the Home Member as a rebel, I still live in the hope that there will be a settlement with these rebels and when it takes place men like you and me will be ignored."**

**Taking the audience back to terms of the Irish Treaty Sir Tej Bahadur referred to the opinion recorded by Mr. Churchill suggesting that Mr. Lloyd George erred in applying tremendous onslaughts without making the fairest offer.**

**"The time had come when the British Government remembering their history and tradition and remembering also the change in the situation and irrepressible urge for freedom in this country should win over the rebels."**

**Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru also said, "Here is a man whose appeal to the imagination of the country is beyond**

doubt, who is going to end his life. It is open to you to criticise it but you cannot alter the fact, and if it should materialise, and if unfortunately he should die within the next 24 or 48 hours, I tell you that the task of reconciliation between the British and Hindus, I should like to say Indian Nation, would become extremely difficult. The task of reconciliation not only between Hindus and Muslims, but between the different nations of the country will become next to impossible."

"I have read the correspondence and the only interpretation I can place is that so far as Mahatma Gandhi is concerned, his adherence to the doctrine of non-violence is as great as it ever was.

"It was plain after the Cripps failure and the Allahabad meeting of the A. I. C. C. that the situation was deteriorating. If the Congress and the Mahatma were to be held responsible for the situation, no less were the Government responsible.

"We make on this occasion an appeal to the civilised conscience of Great Britain and the United Nations and we do say that if it is intended that, this country should settle down to constructive work, then it is absolutely necessary that Mahatma Gandhi should be released."

On the 15th February the Committee of the Indian Congressmen in Great Britain sent a cable to President Roosevelt, Marshal Chiang Kai Shek and M. Stalin

**urging them to intervene in the matter of Gandhiji's fast.**

**"We urge you as strongly to intervene in Gandhiji's fast crisis. We submit that on the principle of the Government and with consent of the governed, the Indian problem can be immediately solved by handing over political power to the Indian Congress."**

**The committee held a meeting in London for demanding immediate and unconditional release of Gandhiji and formation of a national government in India.**

**The president of the India League of America Mr. J. J. Singh even sent message to President Roosevelt and General Chiang Kai Shek on the 19th stating "He was profoundly disturbed by the possibility of Mr. Gandhi's death". He urged them to intervene and prevent this catastrophe and in the name of humanity make Mr. Gandhi's release possible.**

**Ceylon showed a very friendly feeling towards India by asking the British Premier and the Viceroy of India to release Mahatma Gandhi immediately. A telegraphic message from Colombo dated the 23rd February states :**

**"The State Council passed this evening by 27 to 2 votes, Mr, Siripala Sumarakhody's motion expressing concern at Mahatma Gandhi's fast and requesting the British Government to release him immediately. The**

resolution was cabled to the British Premier and His Excellency the Viceroy.

Both Houses of the Legislature in Bengal also demanded the release of Mahatma Gandhi,

On the issue of Mahatma Gandhi's fast three members of the Viceroy's Executive Council, Mr. M. S. Aney, Mr. N. R. Sircar and Sir H. P. Mody resigned. On the 18th February they issued a joint statement from New Delhi saying.

"Our resignations from His Excellency the Governor-General's Council have been announced and all that we desire to do is to say by way of explanation that certain differences arose on what we regarded a fundamental issue (the issue of the action to be taken on Mahatma Gandhi's fast) and we felt we could no longer retain our offices."

These members were congratulated by the people of their country. But all in vain. Gandhiji would not be released, The Government was prepared for all eventualities. They had said that the responsibility lay solely with Mr. Gandhi. On this Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru said in the Leaders' Conference "if Government intended to release they would not have accepted the resignation of these members."

Quite at this time when, Gandhiji was willingly undergoing the long fast behind the bars and was gradually reducing in flesh, the British Government in England



and the Indian Government in India thought it advisable to publish charge sheets. The former a white sheet of 50,000 words and the latter a pamphlet on Congress responsibility for the disturbances of 1942-43 against the Congress holding, the Congress Leaders, principally Gandhiji, responsible for the disturbances in the country. The Congress Responsibility, was published by Mr. Tottenham, the Additional Secretary to the Government of India in the Home Department.

The charge sheet was a thesis of the Government on the disturbances in the country for the Degree of Responsibility to be conferred on Gandhiji, principally, and his associates. The main points of this are :

(1) The Congress leaders chiefly Gandhiji, with the exception of one or two are all pro-Japanese.

(2) The Congress leaders do not wish to help the Government in the war effort and are obstructing.

(3) The Congress leaders had planned thoroughly uniformly for the disturbances and hence are responsible for them.

(4) The British have reconquered India from the Congress.

Summing up the whole theme the pamphlet says ;

"In the face of all the evidence of the atmosphere produced by Mr. Gandhi's writing in the *Harijan*, the evidence of the speeches of the members of the Working Committee before and at Bombay, the evidence of

programme involving violent action distributed at the time of arrests, the evidence of the form of the uprising, the evidence of known Congressmen personally guilty of violent actions, the evidence of the pamphlets broadcast in the name of the Congress, only one answer can be given to the questions as to who must bear the responsibility for the mass uprising and individual crimes which have disgraced and is still disgracing the fair name of India. That answer is the Indian National Congress, under the leadership of Mr. Gandhi.

We are confident that the fact that Mahatma Gandhi, as evinced by his speeches and writings, the members of the Working Committee, as is clear from their statements and speeches, and almost all Congressmen with the exception of a few misguided, are all anti-Japanese and anti-Nazis, the fact that the Congress leaders showed a strong desire to make the war a people's war by enthusing the masses by making them feel that they are fighting to defend their freedom, the fact that it was the Viceroy who disallowed all negotiations with the Congress leaders, the negotiations that might have settled all differences between British and India, the fact that the mass civil disobedience to be launched by the Congress as declared by Mahatma Gandhi was to be in the most non-violent manner, the fact that it was Government that fired the first shot by at once roping in the revered leaders of the country and the fact that the reports of the disturbances were all censored will be a convincing reply to all charges of the

## Government.

It is amusing to note that later on Mr. Amery himself on May 27, in the House of Commons stated that "The Government of India's statement in a white paper made no charges of pro-Japanese sympathy."

On the white paper *The Statesman* makes the following significant remark :

"Much of it is impressive none needs repetition here. One generalization may suffice. The Congress party is large, long established, well organised, its leaders are highly intelligent men. That such a body under the rough risks of war, should have discussed for many weeks as it did last summer, the inauguration of a mass movement amounting to rebellion, but should have omitted to plan in very practical fashion for the movements progress whatever might personally befall there, has never seemed to us a credible proposition.

"This is because the whole scheme was in the mind of Gandhiji who would do things only overtly and not covertly, according to his principles.

*The Manchester Guardian* describes the white paper as a speech for the prosecution and observes :

"The white paper does not touch the problem which when all is said and done confronts us in India, We cannot satisfy the nationalist demand by an indefinite repressive policy however serious the offences that are

punished, Some day we have to talk, negotiate and conduct a political settlement. ”

*The Daily Herald* observes :

“ The war is interested in the future. Let us quarrel no more about past responsibility for degrading the fair name of India. Let us try harder to secure India's partnership redeeming the fair name of civilization.”

*The Daily Worker* of London describes the white paper as :

“ A document that reflected gravely over the honesty and competence of those engaged in its compilation.”

It also adds, “Those responsible for the dead-lock-at-any-price policy as typified in this insincere document must be forced to change their tune. By the adoption of a policy of sincerity agreement with Indian people can yet be reached ”

But it was so comforting to note that, soon after the moment when his condition became very serious, and everybody feared the most tragic event in the history of India, that is Gandhiji's death might happen, when all hopes of his release from all quarters had ceased, by his sheer will power, Mahtma Gandhi began to improve slowly and steadily. There was no change made in his diet. This filled the Indian nation with mirth and glee and revived their hopes. Mahatma Gandhi completed his twenty-one day fast. Upon this the nation arranged a thanks-giving function to the

**Almighty God for the safety of their great leader in the fast. Upon this Dr. D. C. Roy, the attending physician said while presiding at a thanksgiving of the staff and students of the Calcutta University held at Darbhanga :**

**“The whole fast was in the nature of a religious ceremony. If you start from the beginning and go on to the end you will presume that the whole thing was conceived by him as a part and parcel of a religious ceremony. He started by informing the Government that under certain conditions he was prepared to undertake a fast which he called a capacity fast. I think that the word has not been properly understood by the people. The word ‘capacity fast’ was used in contradiction to another expression which he used in 1932. i. e. ‘fast into death.’ In this instance he mentioned definitely that it was not his desire to die but that fast for 21 days, because that was in his opinion, the period which he had to lay before himself as a period of ‘Tapasya.’”**

**Dr. Roy explained that Mahatmaji took citrus juice with water only to give his system sufficient opportunity of expelling all the waste that must have been generating in his body in a large quantity due to the fast. He said that it was the only way in which he could give himself and the doctors the opportunity of getting proper elimination of the waste products from the system.**

**Continuing Dr. Roy said, “Mahatmaji started his**

fast with prayers and he ended his fast with prayers, and throughout the period he had left himself in tune with infinity. Day in and day out while he was being nursed by doctors and nurses, he was always in a state of communion with higher powers. I can assure you and the whole country that the whole period of his fast, the way he fought death, the manner in which from hour to hour he waited patiently for the successful termination of the fast, were something of a privilege to witness. It was like watching a *Yagna*, like watching a devotee at his prayers, and after these prayers were over, I saw him shut his eyes leaning against the doors, I dare say to feel the presence of the Almighty nearer his heart and then he broke his fast."

Concluding Dr. Roy said, "Mahatma Gandhi has been saved for us. What were the forces that operated none of us knew. We had issued a statement on one day that if the fast was not ended it might be difficult to save him. That is what we felt, that is what we were apprehensive of. Every minute that fateful evening, night and the next morning was important. But the tide turned and the Almighty willed otherwise, we pray to God that he might be alive with us for many more years."

Mr. Horace Alexander who had been to Poona and saw Mahatmaji twice during the period of his fast, giving his impression of the fast said :

"Mahatma Gandhi's fast is a call to rededication.

In part to me it is solemn act of self purification and rededication for the sins and sufferings of India and of the world.. I think that is surely a part of his message that he sent to us by calling us to a fresh dedication of our lives in the service of suffering humanity whether it has any special relation to the country or even to the whole world. No one of us can tell."

Mahatma Gandhi himself said on the conclusion of his fast according to B. C. Roy ; "I do not know why Providence has saved me on this occasion, possibly it is because He has some more mission for me to fulfil."

The fast came with a surprise and with a surprise it was over, with Gandhiji quite safe. No one could imagine that Gandhiji would pull through it at this stage and in the delicate state of his health. At one time his condition became so serious and people feared that the most tragic event in the history was drawing nigh. But the most merciful Father heard the fervent prayers of the helpless India and spared Mahatmaji to her. Mahatmaji knew his body has surely capacity for the fast. The fast will ever remain as the greatest event of Mahatmaji's life and one of the most important events of Indian history.

The fast was intended neither as a 'political black mail' nor to find an easy way out. Such imputations are cowardly. Gandhiji could not have the patience

to be a helpless witness to what was going on in the country including the privations of the millions owing to the universal scarcity stalking the land. He had waited for six months and could wait no longer. He wanted to be in a position to advise his countrymen in the situation in which they were put. The situation prevailing was intolerable for him. He was much pained. He wanted a soothing balm for his pains. If convinced of his errors he would dissociate himself from his previous policy or if a concerted action was to be taken, he should be in the Working Committee. In case none of the two things was possible, as a firm believer in Truth and Satyagrah, he must crucify the flesh by fasting to be relieved of the mental torture.

Although even after the fast Mahatma Gandhi and the other Congress leaders are once again the same helpless witnesses to what is happening in their country yet the fast revived in the hearts of Indians a strong hope that there might once again be an attempt to solve the Indian deadlock. Among other things the fast proved the popularity of Gandhiji with the people in India as well as abroad and showed that in the 20th century a miracle could be performed, and it was performed by Mahatma Gandhi. Like any other great man Gandhi bears the sins of others.

Very soon after the termination of the great fast there was a move for reconciliation between the Government and the Congress and for that 46 leaders



of the country including those who attended the Bombay Conference on March 10, and men like the Rt. Hon'ble Mr. Srinivasa Shastri, Sir P. C. Siva Swami Iyer and Mr. Vankatarama Sastri and the principal Magnates and Hindu Maha Sabha leading lights like Dr. Shyama Prashad Mookerjee were the signatories. These persons sent a resolution to the Viceroy that with a view to improve the Indo-British relations and to solve the Indian deadlock they be allowed to interview Gandhiji in the jail. There was then an exchange of correspondence between Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and the Viceroy. Sir Tej in his communication expressed that a delegation consisting of himself, Mr. C. Rajgopalachariar, Mr. M. R. Jayakar and Mr. J. R. D. Tata would meet the Viceroy to explain to him the necessity of permission to see Gandhiji in the jail. The Viceroy in his reply, was understood to have not committed himself to receive the delegation but suggested to Sir Tej to send him a statement of views of the signatories to the Bombay Conference resolution. On receipt of this memorandum His Excellency would consider if any good would result from receiving the deputation. Sir Tej then, who was the Chairman of the Bombay Conference communicated the text of the the Viceroy's reply to Mr. Jayakar, Mr. K. M. Munshi, Mr. Rajgopalachariar and Sir. Jagdish Prashad. These four were asked to prepare a memorandum which may be forwarded to the Viceroy. The memorandum of the statement issued by the leaders was sent by Sir Tej to

the Viceroy who acknowledged the receipt. In reply the Viceroy stated that he would be glad to receive the deputation and further asked that a memorandum on the matters which the deputation might like to raise during the talk with the Viceroy be sent to him preferably in advance.

At the last moment it was suggested that the procedure to be followed at the meeting was that the deputation should read their memorandum and hear the Viceroy's reply thereto and then the proceedings should come to a close, there being no personal discussion of the points that the deputation wished to raise. On this the idea of the deputation meeting the Viceroy was dropped and His Excellency was asked to dispense with their personal attendance.

Owing to the unavoidable absence of Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru the deputation was to consist of Mr. C. Rajgopalachariar, Sir Parshotamdas Thakardas, Pandit H. N. Kunzru, Mr. N. M. Joshi and Mr. K. M. Munshi. A communique issued from the Viceroy's house, New Delhi, dated the 1st April, released for the information of the public, the text of the memorandum submitted by the Deputation from the Leaders' Conference along with Lord Linlithgow's reply. will follow

The memorandum said:

"We are submitting the memorandum in accordance

with His Excellency's desire that he should have a written statement precisely explaining what we wish to say to which His Excellency proposes to give a written reply. While we do so we hope that the helpful spirit in which we approached this matter also animates His Excellency and that it is with a completely open mind that he will receive the Deputation.

"We are glad that His Excellency has found the resolution of the conference of 9th and 10th March perfectly clear. We have therein expressed a desire that His Excellency should permit a few of us to meet Gandhiji who is under detention to ascertain authoritatively his reactions to the events which have happened since his arrest and to explore with him avenues for reconciliation. If His Excellency has no objection to this, we shall avail ourselves of the opportunity and discuss matters with Gandhiji. We will then go to His Excellency again and place our proposals before him. In case His Excellency has any objections to follow this course, we should like to be informed of the objections so that we may try to answer them and for this purpose we desire an interview with His Excellency.

"We have carefully read the correspondence which has passed between His Excellency and Gandhiji and which has been published. We feel that Gandhiji has already expressed his disapproval of violence and sabotage, and we have no doubt that he will cast his influence

on the side of internal harmony and reconciliation.

"The correspondence and statement published in connection with the fast have themselves discouraged the disturbances and the contemplated meeting with Gandhiji will, in our view, further the same object.

"We feel that though order might have been restored on surface everyday that passes without a solution of the Indian problem intensifies the hostility between Britain and India, and renders any future solution more and more difficult to attain until we apprehend it may become even impossible. We are convinced that Gandhiji's assistance is essential for the restoration of goodwill and for a solution of the problem even for the interim period including an adjustment of Hindu-Muslim claims. On the other hand unpleasant as it is we cannot help feeling that refusing to permit us to have any contact with Gandhiji now would be equivalent to a determination on the part of the Great Britain that there should be no attempt at a settlement of the problem and reconciliation between nationalist India and Britain whatever may be immediate administrative convenience thereof. We hope that His Excellency will not take up this attitude. We feel that though there is no present danger of axis aggression in India, the strained relations between Government and the people are fraught with great evil and all that is possible should be done

to replace it by a better feeling.

“As the war is getting long, drawn out measure to solve the economical problem arising out of it as well as plans for increasing production of food and other essential articles and improving transport and distribution as well measures of control have to be involved. Such measures can be organised and regulated only by a national administration or a Government that can reasonably claim to approach that character and is in a position to justify policies adopted from time to time although they may involve considerable hardships on all sections of the people. The situation is growing more and more serious everyday and we feel that a Government commanding the loyal and affectionate co-operation of all the people can be constituted for period of the war only if we are permitted to talk with Gandhiji, consult him, and obtain his support. The request that we make is intended to achieve this object. It cannot hurt the Government or the war effort in the least and in our view is likely to lead to constructive results.”

The Viceroy in his reply repeated the same arguments that the deputation is not representative, that the Congress has not repudiated the violence for which it was responsible, that the Congress has not given assurance for the future and that the national Government stressed in the memorandum is not to be constituted according to their conception.

The Viceroy's refusal to Indian leaders to make

an attempt to solve the Indian dead-lock by seeing Gandhiji in the jail was much resented by every body.

The same was felt much by the churchmen of England who said "Conciliate India". The full statement is reproduced below : -

London, April 3. An appeal to make a public declaration on the Indian situation is made in a letter from prominent churchmen and others to the Archbishop of Canterbury and York, the Metropolitan of India, Moderator of the Church of Scotland and the President of the Free Church Council. The signatories, the letter states, were moved by the tragic succession of events that have occurred in India since the out-break of war and by the conviction that the increasing dangerous situation can yet be retrieved.

The signatories say: "We feel the situation, which has been allowed to develop, is the result of what now appears to many in this country as well as in India as policy of procrastination."

They added: "An overwhelming majority of the British people have long looked for a more constructive policy and co-operative spirit in our relations with India and want to see a broader and more realistic basis established on which it will be possible to build a happier and more progressive future. We believe that a new beginning can and must be made not with renewed promises but with so widely established foundations for genuine co-operation before enmity and mistrust

have become hardened and widespread.

Appealing for a public declaration of the moral and spiritual issues involved, the signatories express the opinion that very real harm was being done to the cause of the Allied Nations. Under these circumstances it would surely be a lasting shame upon our religion and race to keep silent. Christian opinion in this country, in India and in the world at large, was anxiously awaiting leadership in this matter. The signatories included the Bishop of Bradford, formerly India Secretary, Baptist Missionary Society, Calcutta, Reverend Harbert Anderson, Baptist Missionary Society, Reverend George Howells, General Director, Industrial Christian Fellowship; P. T. R. Kirk, Congregational Church Mission, Reverend D. Gordon Livingstone, Miss Mandi Reyden, Reverend Michel Scott, formerly the Indian Ecclesiastical Establishment and Mr. Edward Thompson.

But on the Indian problem Mr. Amery, the Secretary of State for India, during the debate on India, in the House of Commons on March 23, made very bitter remarks. He observed that 'the origin of the situation in India and the reasons for its continuance can only be understood in the light of the Congress party's nature and policy ; originally democratic and constitutional, the Congress has progressively become a dictatorship aiming at the expulsion by revolutionary though professedly non-violent methods of the existing British Raj and its suppression by a Congress Raj. The character and the

methods of the Congress had largely been shaped by a single man, namely Mr. Gandhi, whose peculiar appeal to Hindu veneration for the ascetic has helped to make him an unquestional dictator of by far the largest, best financed, and most rigidly drilled party organisation in India. He repeated the exploded myth that the Congress was trying to establish its Raj and the baseless charge that it was Mr. Gandhi who torpedoed the Cripps' plane. He also remarked that the great success that the Congress achieved in the 1937 elections intoxicated the Congress leaders and the imminence of war came as a shock to Mr. Gandhi's dream of early power. He added that an "open rebellion was started by Mr. Gandhi at a time when the British had withdrawn to within fifty miles of Alexandria, and only the approaching monsoons seemed to stand between India and Japanese invasion. The swift and resolute decision of the Indian members of the Viceroy's Executive Council caused the rebellion to go off at half cock." He repeated the same theme that "the claim that the concentrated and skilled attacks upon vital sectors of strategical considerations were merely a spontaneous manifestation of public indignation against the arrest of popular leaders was straining credulity beyond limit. In the absence of most explicit assurances and effective guarantees as a complete change of attitude among those who have brought so much unhappiness upon India and might still endanger the Allied entire cause in India, it is difficult, indeed dangerous, to consider



any concessions for Mr. Gandhi“ Further he added.

“ We have too lightly assumed and let India assume that her Government would necessarily be similar to our type. Indians alone must find a solution for only then would they be minded to make it succeed. We can only help to solve it by continuous goodwill, active interest and encouragement of every effort the Indians may make to solve the present deadlock: above all, by imparting to them some measures of our common faith in our common future.”

Regarding the charges against Mr. Gandhi and the other Congress leaders enough is known to the readers. The only thing not known is the help to solve the Indian problem by Indians themselves, by continuous goodwill, active interest and encouragement of every effort. Equally unknown to India is the common faith in the common future. If the common faith is the British imperialism and Indian slavery, it is better not to know it at all.

The Government of India by this time had become so hard and wooden and vindictive that at this time Begum Abul Kalam Azad fell seriously ill, telegrams were sent and requests made to the Government to set Maulana Abul Kalam Azad free but to no purpose. The Begum passed away on April 9 but Maulana Sahib had no good fortune to have the last glimpse even of his most beloved wife.

At this time there came up two important cases one

in the High Court of Calcutta to question the validity of Ordinance in Sections 5, 10, 14 and 16 which held that the sections were *ultra vires* and the second in the Federal Court to question the validity of Rule 16 of the Defence of India Act, which held that the Rule went beyond the powers which the Legislature thought fit to confer on the Central Government and was hence invalid.

But the judgment of the eminent Jurist like Sir Maurice Gwyer given on April 22 caused not much embarrassment in New Delhi and White Hall. The authorities showed no sign to obey the decision of the highest tribunal of the country and soon on April 28, framed another validating Ordinance, those detained were not set free even for the intervening interval. Thus runs the validating Ordinance:

New Delhi, April 28. The expected Ordinance validating the action already taken under the Defence of India Rule 26 and amending the Defence of India Act is published to-day.

The Ordinance substitutes the following for existing clause 10 of section 2 (2) of the Act :—

“The apprehension and detention in custody of any person whom the authority, empowered by the rules to apprehend or detain as the case may be suspects on grounds appearing to such authority to be reasonable, of being a hostile origin, or of having acted, acting, being about to act or being likely to act in a manner

prejudicial to the public safety or interest, the Defence of British India, the maintenance of public order, His Majesty's relations with foreign powers or Indian States, the maintenance of peaceful conditions in tribal areas or the efficient prosecution of the war, or with respect to whom such authority is satisfied that his apprehension and detention are necessary for the purpose of preventing from acting in any such prejudicial manner the prohibition of such person from entering or residing or remaining in any area and the compelling of such persons to reside and remain in any area or to do or abstain from doing anything.

“The Ordinance further provides : For removal of doubts, it is hereby enacted that no order heretofore made against any person under Rule 26 of the Defence of India Rules shall be deemed to be invalid or shall be called in question on the ground merely that the said rule purported to confer powers in excess of the powers that might at the time the said rule was made be lawfully conferred by a rule made or deemed to have been made under section 2 of the Defence of India Act 1939.”—*A. P. I.*

At this time on April 26, another surprise was sprung on Indians. Mr. Phillips, President Roosevelt's personal envoy, declared that he applied to the Government of India to interview Mr. Gandhi in the jail for a purpose that was not given out by Mr. Phillips but he was refused permission. So that the things may not take up an ugly shape, and there be no misunderstanding and

any undesirable comments from any American quarter, it was explained in U.S.A. as follows :—

‘ Mr. Phillips’ purpose in seeking appointment with Mr. Gandhi and Pandit Nehru was part of his programme to obtain all possible information from all sides and factions on the Indian problem.

“ President Roosevelt’s special envoy to India Mr. William Phillips would have been remiss in his duty had he failed to make an effort to see Mr. Gandhi and Pandit Nehru,” said the *Washington Post*, “and it is unfortunate that the permission to visit and talk to these imprisoned nationalist Indian leaders was, not granted by the Indian Government.”

The paper added : “Yet under the existing circumstances the British can hardly be blamed for taking the stand they did. A visit by Mr. Phillips to Mr. Gandhi and Pandit Nehru would probably have been interpreted throughout the length and breadth of India as an indication that the United States was ready to intervene in the Indian situation. It might, therefore, have revived the bitter controversy that led the Indian Government to jail the national leaders last year and provoked a revival of the disturbances harmful to the war effort. Evidently the British are content to let the sleeping dogs lie. Whether or not such a policy is wise in the long run, there can be little doubt that the Indian situation is less disturbed to-day than it was a year ago.”

Ordinarily India has little to expect from America a

it is far away from her and is the blood and bones of Britain. But at this time when the Indian leaders have declared that they are interested in the victory of the Allied arms and America is the principal member of the Allied Nations she did expect of America to intervene if not for the sake of India at least for the sake of her whole-hearted co-operation and hence the early victory of the allied arms. It is altogether a vain hope to suppose that America even at this time much less at any other time will try to make a little intervention in the Indian affairs for the sake of India herself. In pursuance of that policy when Mr. Churchill declared in the House of Commons on March 18, that "The Government is convinced that the administration of Britain, British Colonies must remain the sole responsibility of Great Britain," America kept quite quiet. In the face of such testimony what faith can be put in President Roosevelt's words that the Atlantic Charter applies to all humanity. Equally uninspiring to India are his words, "To-day we recognise the fact that our enemies are not only Germany, Italy and Japan, they are all the forces of oppression, intolerance, insecurity and injustice that have impeded the forward march of civilisation," which he uttered on the occasion of second anniversary of the Atlantic Charter at Washington, the words that mean much and convey much hope if supported by intention and action.

At the time Barnard Shaw's indictment of the British Government in imprisoning Gandhiji was publi-

shed in the *Hindu*, he wrote very feelingly.—

"You may quote me as declaring that the imprisonment of Gandhi is the stupidest blunder the government has let itself to be landed in by its right swing to the incurable die-hards.....The King should release Gandhi unconditionally as an act of grace, unconnected with the policy and apologise to him for the mental defectiveness of his cabinet. That would be what is possible to ease the Indian situation."

At this very time the papers published extracts from the speech of Mr. Louis Fischer, the eminent American journalist, that he delivered last February before a crowded house at San Francisco. Louis Fischer had spent a lot of time in India and came into close contact with Gandhiji as well as General Wavell and Lord Linlithgow. He tells us clearly that Gandhiji is not pro-Japanese and that Marshall Chiang Kai Shek had warned Churchill, Roosevelt that attempt to suppress the Indian freedom movement in the midst of the war may drive all India into the arms of Axis. He also tells the cause of the failure of Cripps-mission and the intentions of Mr. Churchill towards India. But it is regretted that extracts are prohibited from publication on the plea that their publication in India will interfere with the good relations between Britain and America although their publication in America itself causes no such interference.

Now another attempt was made by Non-party Leader like Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru. Dr. M. R. Jayakar, Dr. Sachidanand Sinha, Sir Chumilal B. Mehta, Raja

**Maheshwar Dayal Seth and Kanwar Sir Jagdish Parshad** towards ending the Indian deadlock. They issued a weighty statement on May 22 urging upon the Government the necessity of setting up an independent and impartial tribunal to deal with the charges levelled against Gandhiji and the Congress leaders, and in case this is not possible, they should be released to enable them to re-consider the whole situation in consultation with other parties. This they said was demanded by justice no less than expediency. The statement says:—

“ His Excellency the Viceroy’s recent refusal to permit any non-Congress leaders to interview Mahatma Gandhi and the speeches of Mr. Amery in the House of Commons can be reasonably interpreted as indicating that the British Government are resolved to keep Mahatma Gandhi, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and other prominent leaders of the Congress in detention without trial for the duration of the war. Even more significant is the denial to Mr. Phillips, the personal representative of President Roosevelt, of an opportunity to see Mahatma Gandhi. We ourselves have regretted that the Congress should have passed the resolution which it did pass on the 8th August, 1942, at Bombay. We have also condemned the acts of violence and sabotage which took place a few months ago in this country. We wish to place beyond all doubts that we seek for no concession for Mahatma Gandhi and his chief associates. We are not petitioners on their behalf for clemency or tenderness. Our demand is for justice and

no more and no less. Grave charges have been publicly made against Mahatma Gandhi and his colleagues and it has been suggested, both in England and in India, that the Congress leaders were pro-Japanese. To the best of our knowledge and belief there is no truth in this allegation. Mahatma Gandhi's pacifism, known all over the world, should not, in our opinion, be interpreted as amounting to his sympathy with Japan or with any of the Axis powers.

"The charges brought against Mahatma Gandhi are to be found in the published correspondence between the Viceroy and Mahatma Gandhi, in Government communiques and pamphlets and in the pronouncements of the Secretary of State for India. It is somewhat remarkable that these charges have been made at a time when those who could meet them had no opportunity of rebutting them. It has been said that nothing was easier for Mahatma Gandhi than to repudiate acts of violence or acts of sabotage and to withdraw civil disobedience.

"We feel that he has already repudiated the acts of violence and it is our conviction that so far as he is concerned, his adherence to the doctrine of non-violence is as strong to-day as it ever was. For ourselves we do not believe in civil disobedience, either on principle or as a matter of expediency, but we are constrained to observe that matters were allowed to drift after the failure of the Cripps-mission and no attempt was made to avert a crisis by the exercise of imagination and con-



structive statesmanship.

“Taking the situation as it is we urge that the *ipse dixit*, of the executive government should not be regarded as sufficient to justify the prolonged detention of imprisoned leaders without impartial investigation. Let those *ex parte* accusations be investigated by a tribunal of unchallengable status and impartiality – a tribunal so constituted as to satisfy all reasonable men that it will carry on its investigation without fear or favour, and that its decisions will in no way be influenced by the published views of the executive government. We consider that the setting up of such a tribunal is in the highest interests of the government itself. Madame Chiang Kai Shek has recently stated in a public speech in America that Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru should be set at liberty and that speech was made after the charges against him had been broadcast to the world. Can his continued detention be justified before world opinion if he is denied every opportunity of defending himself.

“If the objection to our demand is that such an investigation into the charges against Mahatma Gandhi and his co-workers is not feasible during the war, we should like to point out that in his letter to Mahatma Gandhi dated February 5, 1943, His Excellency the Viceroy said : “If we do not act on all this information or make it publicly known, it is because the time is not yet ripe ; but you may rest assured that the charges against Congress will have to be met sooner or later

and it will then be for you and your colleagues to clear yourselves before the world if you can." To this Mahatma Gandhi replied in his letter dated February 7, 1944 :—"You say that the time is not yet ripe to publish the charges against the Congress. Have you ever thought of the possibility of their being found' baseless when they are put before an impartial tribunal ? Or that some of the condemned persons might have died in the meanwhile or that some of the evidence that the living can produce might become unavailable ?" It is clear, therefore, that so far back as the 5th of February, 1943, the possibility of these leaders' having to clear themselves before the world was considered and maintained by His Excellency the Viceroy himself. We cannot see, therefore, any valid reason why that possibility should not be translated into a fact at this stage. To the objection that the setting up of a tribunal will lead to public excitement, our reply is that the continued detention of these leaders had already caused and is causing grave dissatisfaction and a keen sense of injustice in the public mind. If Mahatma Gandhi and his colleagues are not allowed to meet the charges against them until after the war and are to be kept in prison till then, the plain implication of this is that some of the most prominent Indian leaders will be kept in jail without trial for may be five years and some of them may even die during this long interval. Mr. Amery's tauntingly provocative description of such detention as 'innocuous isolation' has only increased

public resentment. Government may think that they are strong enough to ignore all such feelings and that they are the sole judges as to when and whom to arrest and detain without trial for an unlimited period. Whatever may be said of such action on the part of a Government of the people, the same cannot apply to a government carried on by an irremovable executive, irresponsible to the people of this country or to its legislature and in which the key positions are still in British hands. Whatever the legal position, the Government of India must, in the circumstances, seek a moral basis for its actions and it is with that object in view that we suggest an investigation by an impartial tribunal.

We should, in conclusion, like to point out that the Defence of India Rule, under which Mahatma Gandhi and his colleagues were arrested, was pronounced last month by the Federal Court in an authoritative decision to be invalid. Instead of availing themselves of the opportunity to restore those men to freedom under the sanction of a decisively the highest judicial authority in India, we regret that the Government of India have tried to legalise their action by a validating ordinance. No well-wisher of the country can contemplate without grave concern a continuance of the present state of things which forebodes ill for the mutual relations between India and Britain. The sense of frustration is now deeper if less vociferous. We sincerely hope that our suggestion that the imprisoned leaders may be given a

chance of clearing themselves may be accepted. If Government for any reason are not prepared to set up an impartial tribunal, then justice no less than expediency, demand that Mahatma Gandhi and his colleagues should be set at liberty so that they may apply themselves as free men, as we expect that they will, to a review of the situation and to the solution of the present deadlock in consultation and co-operation with other important parties."

To this statement of the leaders Mr. Amery made a reply in the House of Commons :—

The Secretary of State for India, Mr. Amery, stated in the House of Commons to-day that the Government of India have no intention of staging a trial of Mr. Gandhi and other detained Congress leaders.

Mr. Amery was replying to the Labour Member Mr. Sorensen, who asked whether any response had been made to the recent plea of Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and other non-Congress leaders, that Mr. Gandhi and his colleagues should appear before a judicial tribunal to enable them to refute the allegations of pro-Japanese sympathy and other charges contained in a white-paper. Mr. Amery added that the Government of India's statement was republished in a white paper made on charges of pro-Japanese sympathy.

The last part of the statement of Mr. Amery is a matter of congratulation both to Mr. Amery and

to the leaders like Sir Tej Bahadur. It is the most correct and true statement of facts. We only regret that it has come out too late. But better late than never. In the face of this statement Mr. A. Tottenham's thesis loses half of its value. And we are sure Mr. Amery will soon be convinced and state publically that the thesis has absolutely no value as Gandhiji and his colleagues are not responsible for the disturbances in the country; rather they mean to be a support to the cause of the Allies.

Mr. Amery and Co., have constantly been declaring that unless the Congress and the other parties made up their differences nothing could be done towards the progress of India and to make ~~was~~ their own concern. Gandhiji once again tried to test the British Government of their sincerity and wrote a letter to Mr. Jinnah even from inside the jail. It is not known what were the contents of the letter. Mr. Jinnah even had expressed a desire that Gandhiji should write to him for the purpose. But that letter remains undelivered to Mr. Jinnah till to-day, although remains the news of the letter written appeared in the papers on May 26, 1948.

This was explained by the Government that,  
"In accordance with their known policy in regard to correspondence or interviews with Mr. Gandhi the Government of India have decided that this letter cannot be forwarded and have so informed Mr. Gandhi and Mr. Jinnah. They are not prepared to give

facilities for political correspondence or contact to a person detained for promoting an illegal mass movement which he has not disavowed and thus gravely embarrassing India's war effort at a critical time. It rests with Mr. Gandhi to satisfy the Government of India that he can safely be allowed once more to participate in the public affairs of the country, and until he does so, the disabilities from which he suffers are of his own choice."

Mr. Jinnah even wriggled out from his previous position.

To settle with the other parties in the country Gandhiji is not allowed contact with them because his policy remains the same as before his arrest. To review that policy he is not allowed any contact with the Working Committee. Singly he is not convinced of the Government's point of view. How should the Gordian knot be unravelled? The Government insists that it should be cut by Gandhiji making an absolute surrender. Gandhiji would not do it.

The letter, as revealed later, said to Mr. Jinnah I welcome your invitation (in the 'Dawn'). I suggest our meeting face to face rather talking through correspondence. But I am in your hands.

"I hope that this letter will be sent to you and, if you agree to my proposal, that the Government will let you visit me.

"One thing I had better mention. There seems

to be an "if" about your invitation. Do you say I should write only if I have changed my heart. God alone knows men's hearts.

"I would like you to take me as I am.

"Why should not both you and I approach the great question of communal unity as men determined on finding a common solution and work together to make our solution acceptable to all who are concerned with it and are interested in it."

Your sincerely  
(Sd) M. K. Gandhi.









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